



Limits to patience

'Grace periods have limits' is Egypt's message to Netanyahu as he arrives in Cairo today. **Nevine Khalil** reviews the Egyptian position

French visit

PRESIDENT Hosni Mubarak is to meet French Foreign Minister Hervé de Charette next week in Cairo. De Charette will be touring the region to assess how France could contribute to efforts to resume peace talks between the Arabs and Israel, reports Sherif El-Shubashli from Paris.

First meeting

ISRAELI Foreign Minister David Levy said yesterday he was working on setting up a meeting with Palestinian President Yasser Arafat. The meeting is to be held within a few days, but Levy noted that both sides needed time to prepare a framework for the meeting, "to make sure that nothing went wrong."

Such a meeting will be the first between Arafat and a member of the new Israeli cabinet. To date, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has refused to meet face-to-face with the Palestinian president.

On his part, Arafat this week declined to meet with Dore Gold, Netanyahu's political advisor, sending aides in his place. Khaled Salam, one of Arafat's aides who met with Gold, said that nothing positive came out of the meeting and insisted that issues concerning the Palestinians cannot be discussed on an informal level.

Swap snags

LAST-MINUTE snags yesterday delayed a planned exchange of some 200 Lebanese prisoners held by Israel and its ally, the South Lebanon Army, for the bodies of two Israeli soldiers killed in Lebanon in the 1980s. Lebanese security officials said Israel's insistence on including a third prisoner in the deal was the reason behind the delay. Two German security service officials shuttled between Damascus and Beirut to finalise the details with the leaders of the pro-Israeli militia.

The release will not include top pro-Israeli militia leaders Sheikh Abdel-Karim Obeid and Mustafa Dirani, who were abducted from their homes by Israeli commandos in 1989 and 1994. Their fate is linked to information on Israeli pilot Ron Arad, shot down over South Lebanon in October 1986.

Israel strike

HUNDREDS of thousands of Israeli workers staged a 10-hour strike yesterday, paralysing the country, in protest at the Likud government's economic austerity measures. Most of the 500,000 members of the central trade union federation, Histadrut, joined the strike bringing banks, post offices and the electricity company to a complete halt.

The stock exchange closed and flights were rescheduled as the staff at Tel Aviv's Ben Gurion airport and the national airline El-Al staged a one-hour stoppage. Thousands of other workers demonstrated outside the Knesset in Jerusalem calling on new Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to step down.

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President Hosni Mubarak will meet Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu today in Cairo to discuss ways to breathe life into the faltering Middle East peace process. The Egyptian president will explain the Arab viewpoint on ways to reactivate negotiations. "President Mubarak will present this view objectively without using threats because we believe that this is the effective way to convince," Osama El-Baz, Mubarak's political advisor, told the American-Egyptian Friendship Society earlier this week. El-Baz hopes that the meeting will result in "Israeli readiness to meet Arabs halfway."

El-Baz believes that it is "too premature" to take headline Israeli statements at face value, saying that the new cabinet in Israel needs time to "reconsider and reformulate" its position. "We are not going to be impatient," he said. "We shall see in the coming few months which direction they will go." He added, however, that this grace period will not last "too long [because] the situation does not allow us the luxury of waiting forever."

Describing Netanyahu's visit to Cairo as "more important" than his recent visit to Washington, El-Baz expressed his hope that the Israeli prime minister will show "more moderation and flexibility" while in Cairo. Otherwise, he said, "we will be greatly disappointed," warning that Israel risks international isolation if it continues to reject the land-for-peace formula.

Netanyahu said, "We both recognise the central importance of Egypt as the cornerstone for the Arab-Israeli peace and President Mubarak's important role, leading role, in not only leading the Arab world but also in seeking to cement and broaden the circle of peace."

Dore Gold, political advisor to Netanyahu, arrived in Cairo yesterday to hold talks with his Egyptian counterpart, El-Baz, in preparation for the Israeli premier's visit, which will include a joint press conference. Israel seemed to be making a goodwill gesture on Tuesday by partially easing a 19-week blockade of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

Netanyahu's inaugural visit to an Arab state comes at a time when tensions are rising in the region in reaction to Netanyahu's continued hostile statements. The Israeli prime minister angered Arabs by stating that future progress in negotiations should be based on the principles of security-for-peace, and not the widely-approved land-for-peace formula. At first it was believed that Netanyahu's campaign statements would be modified once he formed a government, but, during his six-day visit to Washington last week, Netanyahu reiterated his "three no's" policy: no to a Palestinian state, no to the division of Jerusalem and no to the return of the Golan Heights to Syria. Netanyahu also vowed to expand Jewish settlements in the Occupied Territories.

After maintaining a "wait and see" policy until he held talks with the Israeli premier, Mubarak today will have the opportunity for exchanging views "in depth," El-Baz said.

Asked whether it will be difficult for Netanyahu to change his course after winning the elections on hard-line policies, El-Baz told *Al-Ahram Weekly* that the Israelis "will have to follow a different line, one that is

conductive to the making of a comprehensive peace". He added that Israel was under "certain obligations and it is their responsibility [to meet them]."

Arab leaders warned Israel during last month's Cairo summit to pursue the land-for-peace formula or "bear sole and full responsibility" for setbacks in the region. Egypt's Foreign Minister Amr Moussa said earlier this week that the basis previously agreed upon for the peace process did not need revision. "In fact, any revisions will have negative and dangerous effects on the whole peace process," he said.

Egypt's prime minister during the Camp David negotiations and one of the architects of the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty, Mustafa Khalil, disagrees with the view that Mubarak should present Netanyahu with ultimatums. "Negotiations are not based on ultimatums," he said, adding that the Arabs should concentrate on peace "as a strategic goal, since that way they will be appealing to that half of Israeli society supporting peace."

But outside the corridors of official diplomacy, Netanyahu has little to hope for in the form of a warm reception. Indeed, according to Ragab El-Banna, the editor-in-chief of the national weekly magazine, *October*, the Israeli premier should expect no reception at all. He wrote, earlier this week, "On the official level, Mr Netanyahu may find someone to talk to, but on the popular level he will not find anyone who is willing to see, or listen to him."

Egypt's Press Syndicate, meanwhile, has called upon Arab states to refuse any dialogue or normalisation with Israel until it openly declares its commitment to international agreements and responds to all Arab demands. A statement issued Monday, Egypt's journalists declared their "total opposition to Israel's policy under the leadership of Benjamin Netanyahu."

Similar sentiments were expressed by the country's opposition parties and on the eve of Netanyahu's visit, Yassin Seragaddin, vice-president of the Wafd Party, told *Al-Ahram Weekly* that his party will issue a statement this morning declaring its rejection of Netanyahu and his policies. The party wants the Egyptian government to freeze the normalisation of relations with Israel, and Seragaddin said he had no faith in Netanyahu altering his position.

Ibrahim Shukri, head of the Islamist-oriented Labour Party, said that Mubarak "must explain to this arrogant man what the Arabs are capable of if he backs out of the Palestinian-Israeli agreement." Shukri suggested that Egypt cut down the level and size of its diplomatic mission in Tel Aviv.

Rifat El-Said, secretary-general of the leftist Tagammu Party, said while Egypt should not give Netanyahu an opportunity to discontinue the process, it should insist that "that he abides by the principles of Madrid." He added that the meeting "should concentrate on removing the land mines Netanyahu has planted on the road to peace," but not aggressively. "Aggravation will be faced with aggravation, and will result in nothing," El-Said noted.

Netanyahu will be travelling to Jordan next Thursday to hold talks with King Hussein, who signed a peace agreement with Israel in 1993. (see pp.3,4,10&11)

Arabs look towards Cairo

When Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu meets President Hosni Mubarak today, he will be presented with a united Arab stand, writes **Khaled Dawoud**

Following his meetings this week with Palestinian President Yasser Arafat, Jordanian Prime Minister Abdel-Karim Al-Kabarti and Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk Al-Shar'a, President Hosni Mubarak will present the Israeli premier with a united Arab view concerning the future of peace talks with Israel.

The message will be clear: commitment to the principles of the Madrid peace conference based on the formula of exchanging land for peace and adherence to what has already been agreed between the Arabs and Israel.

Arab foreign ministers of the Damascus Declaration, comprising Egypt, Syria and the six Gulf Cooperation Council countries, reaffirmed the same view in their meeting which ended in Muscat, Oman, on Saturday. They reacted strongly to Netanyahu's headline statements during his visit to the United States last week in which he refused to discuss Jerusalem and announced plans to expand Jewish settle-

ments in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

In their final statement, the ministers expressed their surprise at Netanyahu's talk about the lack of democracy in the Arab world, when Israel violates daily the human rights of the Palestinian people who have been living under Israeli military occupation for decades.

And in case Israel forgot, the Arab ministers repeated the recent Cairo summit warning that any deviation from the agreed principles of the peace process would lead Arab countries to reconsider their relations with Israel. Officials from Qatar and Oman, two of the most forthcoming countries in terms of normalising relations with Israel before Netanyahu's election, confirmed during the Muscat meeting their commitment to what was agreed upon at the Cairo summit, relating normalisation to progress in the peace process.

President Mubarak will also deliver to Netanyahu a long list of Palestinian de-

mands presented by Arafat during the meeting between the two Arab leaders: re-deployment of the Israeli army in Lebanon, allowing Palestinians to trade freely with Egypt and Jordan, the release of thousands of Palestinian prisoners and establishing an agreed "safe passage" between self-rule areas in the West Bank and Gaza.

Syrian Foreign Minister Al-Shar'a has reportedly reaffirmed his country's stand towards peace with Israel in the talks with Mubarak's full withdrawal in return for full peace and normalisation of relations. Jordanians, meanwhile, remained the most optimistic. Jordanian Prime Minister Al-Kabarti told reporters, "I knew this optimism would not satisfy all parties. But we are certain that peace has been established and that there can be no retreat from peace."

Shortly after returning home following his Cairo talks, Al-Kabarti went to Israel where he conferred with Netanyahu on Tuesday night.

Co-sponsorship revitalised?

As Foreign Minister Amr Moussa returned to Cairo for Egyptian-Israeli talks, **Abdel-Malek Khalil** talked to Egypt's ambassador in Moscow about the visit's implications

Foreign Minister Amr Moussa on short his Russian trip in order to return to Cairo to meet visiting Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. But Moussa's trip re-kindled old ties between Cairo and Moscow and reaffirmed the importance Egypt attaches to its traditionally warm relationship with Russia. Moussa's visit also came at a most opportune moment. There are fast changing developments on the Russian political scene.

The big question that puzzles Egypt, and other Arab nations, is whether Russia is capable of playing a more assertive and constructive role in the Middle East. Russia is, after all, together with the United States, a co-sponsor of the peace process in the region.

Moussa had especially fruitful discussions with Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin. Another of the highlights of Moussa's Moscow trip was his meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeni Primakov. The Egyptian am-

bassador in Moscow, Reda Shehata, told *Al-Ahram Weekly* that the talks between Moussa and his Russian counterpart were frank and friendly. The talks touched on a wide range of issues including bilateral, regional and international issues. Shehata disclosed that Primakov assured Moussa that Russia stood firmly behind the re-election of United Nations Secretary-General Boutros Ghali. "Russia," Primakov stated, "backed the Organisation of African Unity's decision at last week's Yaounde summit meeting to support Ghali's re-election." Russia has always appreciated the role played by Ghali in the very turbulent post-Cold War era.

Primakov agreed with Amr Moussa that Israel must return to the negotiating table and relinquish its insistence on the so-called "security-for-peace" formula. Only the land-for-peace formula will serve as a workable framework for a fair settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict, Moussa said.

"The foreign ministers of Egypt and Russia confirmed their attachment to a just peace settlement in the Middle East on the basis of UN resolutions 242 and 338 and the principle of land-for-peace in the framework of the 1991 Madrid Conference," Shehata told the *Weekly*.

Chernomyrdin concurred with Moussa that the resolution of the Palestinian question lies at the heart of a just and peaceful settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The Palestinians are entitled to an independent and sovereign state, Moussa and Chernomyrdin agreed. The two foreign ministers also said that Israel must let go of its so-called security zone in southern Lebanon and hand back the Golan Heights to Syria. Moussa and Chernomyrdin were insistent that all Arab land seized by Israel in the aftermath of the 1947 Arab-Israeli War must be returned to the Arabs.

The trip "has shown that Russian-Egyptian relations are in a good state", Moussa told reporters in Moscow.



Palestine's flag flies in Atlanta

THE STAFF is set, and by tomorrow evening the torch will be lit, commemorating the dawn of the centennial Olympic Games. Over 12,000 athletes representing 177 nations are already in Athens, Georgia, some confident, others nervous, but all ready to give their all for their country and for the gold.

For one particular team, however, these games are of particular importance. The Palestinian team, made up of three athletes and a doc-

tor accompanying officials, will make their Olympic debut. They will march along with the other athletes representing their countries, carrying their flag: white, green and red flag with a symbol of their dream on it. The Palestinian delegation in the site to which is seen rising their flag in the gold.

"I don't need a medal for myself," said Yehia, one of the team's members, who also works as Arafat's bodyguard. "We are here

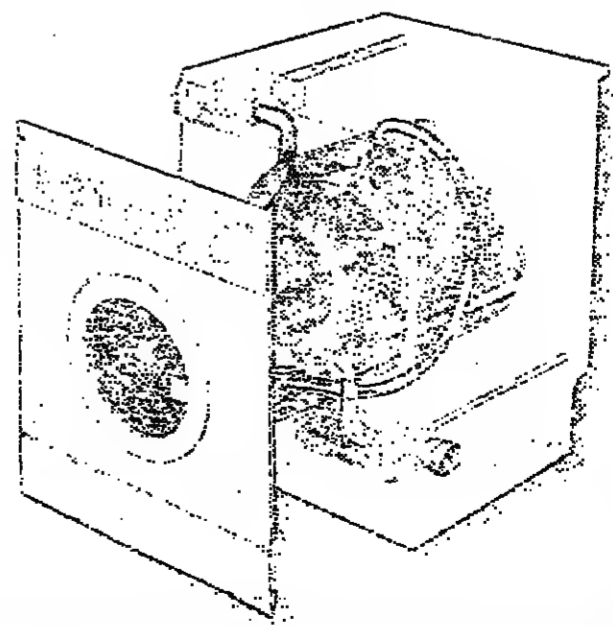
to promote the image of Palestinians as a united people." Olympic spirit aside, however, politics lurked in the background. A few days ago, Israel lodged a formal complaint with the International Olympic Committee (IOC) protesting that the Palestinian team will be allowed to compete under the name of Palestine. The IOC ruled, in its favour, a complaint, thereby allowing the Palestinians to compete. (see *Al-Ahram Weekly* pp.10&11)

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A parliamentary harvest

The People's Assembly was able to report a long list of achievements at the end of its first parliamentary session last Sunday. However, some analysts argue that its accomplishments were limited. The way the Assembly is conducted, they believe, means it lacks strength as either a legislative or supervisory body.

At the Assembly's final sitting on Sunday, Speaker Ahmed Fathi Sorour praised the legislative and supervisory roles the Assembly had played in its first seven-month session, which followed last December's parliamentary elections. These roles, he said, had been particularly important during this session, "because the session coincided with recent changes in the state's socio-economic policies within the framework of the second stage of the economic reform programme".

In legislative terms, Sorour reported that the Assembly had passed 231 laws (compared with 210 laws in last year's session). Twenty-five of these covered economic affairs; 179 dealt with financial and other matters. According to Sorour, the number of laws approved this year is evidence of the Assembly's vitality, its close connection with society and ability to respond to its needs.

Some experts, however, disagreed with this analysis.

Professors of constitutional law had different points of view on how to gauge a parliament's success in fulfilling its legislative role.

Yehia El-Gamal, professor of constitutional law at Cairo University and a former chairman of the Assembly's Constitutional and Legislative Committee, argues that the success of a parliament's legislative role, in any nation, is usually measured not by how many laws it passes per parliamentary session, but by how many of those laws have been submitted by its deputies.

According to El-Gamal, the fact that most laws passed by the Egyptian Assembly are initiated by the government, makes it "a parliament of reaction rather

As the parliamentary session drew to a close, Speaker Fathi Sorour praised its role as a legislature and overseer of government performance. Some deputies and analysts, however, had reservations about its effectiveness in either capacity, writes Gamal Essam El-Din



Fathi Sorour

Kamal El-Ganzouri

Khaled Mohieddin

Yehia El-Gamal

Kamal Khaled

Ayman Nour

Fawzia Abdel-Satar

than action". Article 86 of the Constitution, he said, actually conferred the superior right to submit laws on the deputies. "The deputies have the superior right to draft laws because their power to formulate policies and follow legislative options different from the government's derives solely from parliament," explained El-Gamal.

However, the Assembly's executive regulations stipulate that the deputies' bills must first be studied by the Assembly's Proposals and Complaints Committee before being submitted to parliament. And, El-Gamal said, "The fact that this committee usually takes a very long time in discussing deputies' laws has almost resulted in denying deputies their right to have their bills debated in the Assembly." According to parliamentary statistics, the Assembly passed just nine laws proposed by deputies in last year's parliamentary session. In the most recent session, this figure fell to merely one law out of a total 31 proposed by deputies.

However, Fawzia Abdel-Satar, former chairwoman of the Constitutional and

Legislative Committee, argued that bills are referred to the Proposals and Complaints Committee to assist deputies in drafting legislation. Drafting a law was by no means an easy task, she said; it required skill and experience to achieve what the author of the draft actually intended — a law that fulfilled a need in society. "Government laws," on the other hand, "are intensively studied by the cabinet's legislative committees and usually reflect a pressing need in society, while parliamentary deputies lack the experience and information to forge an integrated, balanced, and constitutional law."

According to former independent MP Kamal Khaled, deputies' own lack of participation is just as much to blame as administrative procedures for the lack of MP-inspired legislation. He said that deputies were more preoccupied with requests to ministers for privileges and special favours than with thinking up and drafting legislation.

In the final sitting, deputies Khaled Mohieddin, leader of the leftist Tagammu Party, and Ayman Nour, of the liberal

Wafd Party, both criticised the way government laws are passed in the Assembly. According to Mohieddin, these laws are usually passed with surprising speed and without allowing deputies enough time to study them. He cited the fact that nine laws had been rushed through parliament in the last two days of the session.

In terms of parliament's supervisory role, Speaker Sorour asserted that parliament had exerted effective supervision of government performance during the session: "This was achieved by giving deputies the right to direct as many as 175 questions and 93 requests for information and urgent statements to government ministers, compared with 36 and 117 respectively in 1994-95 session. In addition, deputies directed four parliamentary interpellations to ministers, compared with 6 in the previous session."

But according to El-Gamal, information requests and urgent statements directed by deputies to government ministers cannot be considered as having any influence on government performance. "As a matter of fact, while these tools enable deputies to

ask for information on certain issues, they do not in fact amount to any kind of supervision over government ministers," he said. Even with these tools, he added, deputies usually failed to get the information they had asked for: "It's no secret that ministers usually don't bother to answer the questions or take a very long time to answer them."

This assessment was supported by Abdel-Moneim El-Oleimi, an independent deputy for Tanta (Gharbiya Governorate), who said that he was still awaiting an answer to the question he had sent four months ago to Public Sector Minister Atef Elbeid on the arbitrary measures against workers in some newly privatised projects.

According to Amany Qandil, a researcher on parliamentary and political issues at the National Centre for Sociological and Criminological Research, these parliamentary tools have never been effective enough to result in the withdrawal of confidence from the government or even from a certain minister. "This also applies to parliamentary interpellation,

considered parliament's strongest supervisory tool," said Qandil.

Besides, she continued, the Egyptian parliament had a history of using these tools to deal mainly with local issues. "Deputies tend to use parliamentary questions, information requests, and urgent statements to raise purely local issues related to their own constituencies. In fact, it would be more appropriate to discuss these issues in local councils," she argued.

The Assembly now has an extremely effective supervisory tool, namely the Central Auditing Agency (CAA), under its control. The CAA was brought under the Assembly's jurisdiction in June 1975 to give it more power in supervising government performance, fighting corrupt practices in public sector companies, and monitoring the implementation of the state's budget and socio-economic plan.

But in the 1994-95 session, the Assembly discussed only 24 CAA reports. In the last session, this figure dropped to a mere 18 reports. However, Qandil argued that bringing the CAA under the Assembly's direct jurisdiction had not led to any enhancement of the Assembly's supervisory role over the government. "This is largely due to the fact that bringing the CAA under the Assembly's jurisdiction was merely a reaction to the increase of corruption cases following the introduction of the open-door economic policies to Egypt in the mid-seventies," she said. "Although the CAA has submitted a huge number of reports to the Assembly on cases of corruption, parliamentary discussion of them has never led to the prosecution of officials or even to speedy righting of financial malpractices." This is largely due to the fact, Qandil continued, that reports are usually delayed in reaching parliament. In the last session, for example, the Assembly discussed two CAA reports dealing with financial practices in the Ministry of Awqaf (Islamic endowments) in 1993.

Rigging with a difference

A male MP with a female birth certificate has been stripped of his immunity and is being investigated on charges of rigging official documents and draft dodging. Mona El-Nahhas reports

Reda Abdel-Rahman, member of parliament for the ruling National Democratic Party (NDP) representing the constituency of Toukh in Qalyubiya Governorate, has become the talk of the town. Not only has the 51-year-old deputy been accused of forging a certificate exempting him from military service, but it has also been revealed by the Civil Affairs Department that Abdel-Rahman, whose first name can be used for both sexes, was classified as 'female' in the department's registry. A birth certificate in his name has been uncovered, with the gender square ticked 'female'.

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that Abdel-Rahman's case has provided ample material for newspaper cartoonists and satirists. But for Abdel-Rahman, it is no laughing matter. There is no statute of limitation for the crime of evading military service, making him liable to prosecution no matter how long ago the offence was committed.

And, on 13 July, just two days before parliament was adjourned for the summer holidays, the People's Assembly voted to strip Abdel-Rahman of his parliamentary

immunity. The measure was taken in response to a request from the minister of justice to enable the military prosecution to undertake investigations, scheduled to begin next week. The accused, meanwhile, steadfastly maintains his innocence.

Abdel-Rahman began his political career in 1981, when he joined the Qalyubiya Municipal Council as an NDP member; he stayed in his post until 1996. After an unsuccessful candidacy in the 1990 parliamentary elections, he stood again in the Toukh constituency in the 1995 elections. The constituency was the scene of violent acts and murder during the election campaign. Abdel-Rahman managed to elude the seat representing workers and took his place in the People's Assembly.

He did not have long to enjoy his success. His case first came to the attention of the authorities last month, after a complaint was filed with the Northern Cairo Military Prosecution Authority by El-Sayed Abdel-Ghani, a previously unknown constituent, who signed himself "an honest citizen of Toukh". The complaint accused Abdel-Rahman of forgery.

Abdel-Rahman told Al-Ahram Weekly

that he had never heard of Abdel-Ghani, and described the whole episode as "a mean conspiracy" aimed at damaging his reputation. "Citizens of Toukh don't believe any of these lies, and have pledged their complete support," he said. "In my post at the Qalyubiya Municipal Council I did my best for them, and they are very grateful. It was they who insisted that I should run in the last elections, and they backed me during my election campaign."

When the case is over, Abdel-Rahman continued, he will hold a press conference during which he will reveal, with documentary proof, the "black history" of the political rivals who are behind the conspiracy.

As far as the birth certificate is concerned, Abdel-Rahman maintained that the information on his own certificate is correct. He said he had no idea how the mistake happened, but suggested it could be the result of a clerical error on the part of a Civil Affairs Department employee. Immediately it came to his attention, Abdel-Rahman said he asked the Interior Ministry to take measures to correct the information.

The forged military service certificate, is-

sued in 1972, declares that Abdel-Rahman is exempt on the grounds that his father is over 60 and that he is an only son. Although the certificate carries the necessary official seals, the information it contains, allegedly supplied by Abdel-Rahman to the Cairo branch of the Conscription Department, is wrong. Far from being an only son, Abdel-Rahman has two brothers, Gaber, 57, and Fahri, 48. And his father had been dead for seven years before the issue of the certificate.

Abdel-Rahman maintains complete ignorance of the certificate. The only reason he never did military service, he said, was because the Conscription Department never summoned him.

Official action against Abdel-Rahman began with an initial report on the case by the Military Prosecution Authority. It was submitted to the minister of justice, who sent it, along with the case file, to the People's Assembly.

The report was examined by the Legislative Committee of the People's Assembly, which was convinced that stripping Abdel-Rahman of his parliamentary immunity was the best way to proceed with

the case. If he is proved guilty he will then be stripped of his membership. "The People's Assembly would have to declare with a two-thirds majority that his membership is null and void," explained a senior source at the Assembly. "In this case," the source added, "there will be a by-election in the Toukh constituency to fill the vacant seat."

The move to strip Abdel-Rahman of his immunity was approved by a large majority. However, Abdel-Rahman had a few supporters in the house who voted against the move. Their stance prompted Wafdist deputy Ayman Nour to express amazement at their attitude.

Unfortunately for Abdel-Rahman, it seems that his explanation regarding his military service may not hold water. In 1964, Abdel-Rahman was appointed at Qalyubiya's agricultural development bank. As is the case with all civil servants in Egypt, he was required to provide a certificate verifying his military service status before appointment. Abdel-Rahman claims that in the 1960s, little importance was attached to such matters and he was never pressed to submit a form. However, the bank's board chairman Hamed Hassanien

has since decided to take legal action against Abdel-Rahman, because a copy of the forged certificate was found in his personnel file.

Abdel-Rahman says he has all the necessary documents to prove his innocence: "I'm not worried about my legal position, because I think it's very strong. That's why I myself asked for my parliamentary immunity to be lifted. I'll go to the military court with absolute trust in the integrity of the Egyptian judiciary."

According to Atef El-Banna, professor of constitutional law at Cairo University, the crimes of which Abdel-Rahman could be charged are forging official documents and evading military service. "There is a statute of limitation of 10 years for the first crime, unless it is proved that he actually used the forged document," he said. However, under Law No. 127, which governs military service "the offence of evading service has no statute of limitation. If found guilty, he could be sentenced to between three and seven years' imprisonment. He would also be deprived of all his political rights, including voting and standing for election."

American intelligence agent stabbed

An American military intelligence agent was stabbed to death on Monday night at a Cairo hotel by a man described by police as mentally disturbed, reports Jallan Halawi

The US Embassy has ruled out the possibility that an American government employee stabbed to death on Monday night at the Semiramis Hotel in downtown Cairo had been deliberately targeted. The killing, American officials said, was a random act of violence.

Judith Iris Goldenberg, 56, was stabbed in the back by a lone attacker while just inside the hotel entrance. US Embassy officials said last Tuesday she had been on temporary duty at the embassy, filling in over the summer. According to the French Press Agency, the US government has announced that Goldenberg was working for the Defence Intelligence Agency, which spies for the military. An official of the US Embassy in Cairo confirmed this report in a telephone interview with Al-Ahram Weekly yesterday.

There was no indication that she was killed because of her nationality or connection with the US government.

A statement issued by the Ministry of Interior also said that the killing was not believed to be the work of Islamist extremists, who have sometimes targeted foreigners as part of their anti-government campaign.

The attack occurred at about 9.30pm. Police said Goldenberg had entered the main door and had just approached the

metal detector gate when Omar Mohamed Noa'man, 28, ran up and stabbed her fatally in the back.

According to documents found by the police in Noa'man's apartment, who was arrested at the scene, suffered from paranoid schizophrenia and had been exempted from military service on that account. His mother, police sources added, had obtained an order committing him to a mental hospital. He had been released on 10 June. Noa'man remained silent during questioning on Tuesday.

According to eyewitnesses, Noa'man had arrived at the hotel just before the attack. He told staff he was looking for work but was asked to come back the next morning when someone would be available to deal with his application.

He then ran towards the entrance and stabbed Goldenberg, leaving his knife sticking out of her back. Two taxi drivers and a hotel security guard tackled him and held him until police arrived. Police in the Qasr El-Nil district ordered an autopsy and confined the attacker to a psychiatric hospital for tests to determine his mental state.

The hotel, which is often used to house visiting diplomats and political delegations, was the site of another fatal attack on foreigners. On 26 October, 1993, a lone gunman entered

the hotel and opened fire with a pistol in the coffee shop, killing two Americans and a Frenchman. Three other foreigners were wounded. Several of the victims had been in Cairo for a law convention.

In another incident, police shot dead an Islamist militant on Monday after he opened fire on them as they tried to arrest him, the Ministry of Interior said.

Accounts of his death varied. The Interior Ministry said in a statement that the militant, Sayed Abdel-Rehim Mustafa, 28, was on his way to meet other extremists near a railway station when he was ambushed by police and the shooting ensued. However, police in Assiut said that Mustafa was killed aboard a train.

According to the ministry, the police had acted on a tip-off and ambushed Mustafa when he was en route from his hideout in the hills south of Assiut to the village of Abu-Tig, 35 kilometres to the north.

The statement said that Mustafa was an active leader of Al-Gama'a Al-Islamiyya's military wing. Mustafa, the statement added, was wanted in connection with 20 violent incidents, including the murders of three policemen in 1995 and the armed robbery of an Assiut bank.

Underwater excavation runs aground

The French-Egyptian excavation of the submerged ruins of Pharos Island off the coast of Alexandria seems to have reached an impasse, writes Hala Halim

Procrastination and committees ever-impeding at the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA) appear to be impeding the progress of the French-Egyptian excavation of submerged ruins of Pharos Island in Alexandria.

This, the fourth season of the excavation, delayed because further permits had to be obtained, did, however, begin on an auspicious note. One long-pending issue that seemed to be resolved was that of a breakwater of about 180 concrete blocks dumped some years ago on top of the submerged antiquities by the Engineering Department of the SCA, for the protection of the Mameluke Qait Bey Fort.

Abdel-Halim Nouredin, secretary-general of the SCA, had affirmed that "the concrete blocks are not going to be completely raised from the site, but deposited elsewhere underwater, according to the recommendations of a workshop to be held in the coming weeks to decide on a strategy to protect the fort while allowing the archaeologists to complete their work." However, six weeks after the beginning of the season, the archaeologists are yet to receive the authorisation for the removal of the blocks.

The tardiness is explained by Nouredin in terms of the said workshop having been delayed due to the "procedures" involved. However, he was optimistic that "the multi-disciplinary committee... [comprising] professors from the Centre For the Research of Coastal Protection, the Navy, and experts from the Faculty of Science and Engineering" would be held in the near future. "We have already received the list of names and are completing the necessary procedures," he added. Meanwhile, with a fund of well over one million French francs earmarked for the May-June '96 season, the team has dwindled to 15 divers during the impasse.

Another SCA statement concerns the raising of objects from the site. The reasons for this were explained by Nouredin in rather cryptic terms: "The lifting of antiquities will take place by a certain decision, according to certain timing, in co-ordination with certain authorities." Asked for further explanation, Nouredin cited the need for appropri-

ate weather conditions. However, although the weather was at that time unsuited to the raising of objects, climatic conditions more conducive to work have prevailed over the past six weeks.

It is also worth noting that weather conditions were hardly suitable on at least two previous occasions when objects were raised from the site. When Minister of Culture Farouk Hosni visited Qait Bey Fort for a press conference on the excavation on a very windy day last October, the team felt the need to mark the occasion by raising an object (a female Ptolemaic torso, as it happened). Likewise, a colossal head of one of the Ptolemies was lifted for the benefit of French President Jacques Chirac last spring — long before "appropriate" weather put in an appearance.

Raising objects from the site, while not an integral part of the archaeologists' work, allows for closer study of elements less visible underwater given the high level of pollution at the site and the fact that in certain areas antiquities lie heaped on top of each other. But Nouredin's reluctance may well be prompted by an appealing proposal put by Hassan El-Banna, a professor of marine biology from Alexandria University — namely, leaving the objects *in situ* and converting the site into an underwater archaeological park.

Indeed, Dorreya Said, a representative of the SCA in Alexandria has commented that "we have put the raising of objects on hold until all the experts decide on the ideal place to display them, and until we have answers to such questions as to whether leaving objects *in situ* may harm them." Such questions, she added, "will be broached at a UNESCO conference on the submerged antiquities of Alexandria, to be held next April."

According to Dominique Allio, currently acting head of the excavation, in the absence of Jean-Yves Empereur, the team is "verifying information already gathered and, working with architectural archaeologists, analysing the data." Among other comments, explained Allio, "we are trying to find the architectural function of the stones and the relationship between one block and another."

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Implementation of the final phase of President Hosni Mubarak's LE6.2 billion project to build 7,500 new schools began this month.

Initiated in 1991, the project aims to put an end to the two-period system, particularly prevalent in poor governorates and heavily populated areas, where children are divided into two groups and taught at different times to ease overcrowding. It also aims to provide schools in isolated rural areas.

In this final phase, 1,500 schools will be built at a cost of LE1.4 billion by the Schools Construction Organisation (SCO).

According to Samir Youssef, head of the SCO,

Work on the final stage of a project to build 7,500 new schools and renovate thousands of existing ones is now in progress, reports Rania Khalaf

the renovation of old schools is also being undertaken as part of the project. According to estimates by Minister of Education Hussein Kamel Bahadddin, 50 per cent of the nation's schools had been in a bad state of repair, and some rural schools lacked basic facilities like toilets. Thousands of schools were in such a precarious state that they were liable to collapse.

The SCO established a six-year plan, set to be

implemented between 1991 and 1997, to complete the renovations. So far, work has been completed at 21,175 schools. Another 3,000 will be renovated by the end of the next school year.

The new schools, Youssef said, had been constructed according to new building regulations which stipulate appropriate size of classrooms and playgrounds and proper lighting systems. "New schools should be located in environmentally clean

areas, with facilities for cultural, sports and recreational activities," he explained.

To ensure that schools have maximum opportunities to use modern technology, the SCO also established a computer repair centre, affiliated to the Technological Development Centre (TDC), inaugurated by Mrs. Mubarak early this year.

The TDC is part of the national educational plan initiated by Mubarak in 1992, which aims at incorporating technology into education to prepare young people for the challenges of the modern world. The nation's annual budget for education currently stands at LE11.8 billion.

Egypt and the United States maintain a "very good and close friendship", President Hosni Mubarak's top political adviser, Osama El-Baz, told the US-Egyptian Friendship Society on Monday.

Although it may appear to some that relations between the two countries are going through a period of crisis, "this is a false impression because Egyptian-American relations are founded on solid ground," El-Baz asserted.

Addressing an audience of about 100 at the National Construction and Urbanisation Research Centre, El-Baz said that although relations may fluctuate, the US has maintained good relations with the countries of the Middle East for well over a century.

President Mubarak is expected to visit the US at the end of this month to hold talks with President Bill Clinton and other top political figures. Mubarak will not merely be a "messenger, but will present Arab views on means to preserve the peace process," El-Baz said. Mubarak will also speak to the American media and address the public. "As we do so, we will always keep in mind our brothers [the Arabs], through continuous communications," Mubarak's adviser said.

On the issue of US commitment to the peace process, El-Baz said that the Americans "cannot ignore Arab security, because they know that if the Arabs are deprived of their rights, there will be no peace." He added that it would be incorrect to believe that the US will "drastically" change its policies towards the Middle East after the presidential elections in November. "One can only expect a limited, not absolute change in US policies," he said.

El-Baz believes that the US role continues to be effective because the US is "still committed to the peace process [and] to helping the parties negotiate according to the terms of reference which were agreed upon in the Madrid conference." El-Baz added that the US has not backtracked since it still believes "that the peace process should be based on the land-for-peace formula."

He said that although the US position is "partially biased towards Israel" it does not encroach on Washington's effective role in the peace process. El-Baz did not expect the US to be "totally neutral" on the issue, but hoped for "a reasonable, objective, and even-handed position." He also believes that an increasing number of Americans realise that in spite of the "special relation between them and Israel, most of their interests are with Arab countries."

After the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, "certain disagreements have appeared every now and

'Friends, not allies'

Egypt looks to the US as its partner in preparing Egypt for the next century, but asks that it keep an open mind regarding the peace process, reports **Mervin Khatib**

then", particularly in the mid-'50s and '60s, El-Baz said, but relations have been mended extensively since then. Egypt and the US are "friends, but not allies" because of each country's different geographic, political, economic and cultural backgrounds. He added, however, that "the lines of communication are always open, and in most cases the US has been attentive and responsive." Mubarak's adviser continued that each country "respects the positions and limitations of the other."

El-Baz pointed out that even though their roles "may not follow the same lines, they are parallel," explaining that the relationship between the US and Israel is "a very special one," but to consider the influential Jewish lobby in the US as the reason behind this is "a simplistic explanation."

"We are not trying to undo [the US-Israeli] relationship," El-Baz asserted, "but what we are trying to do is draw the US' attention to the fact that this relationship should not hinder a greater degree of understanding and a more balanced position, especially when it comes to the Middle East."

El-Baz pointed out that even before the death of President Gamal Abdel-Nasser, Egypt had already accepted an American role in the Middle East through Roger's plan. Bilateral relations were boosted further after the October 1973 War. The US also developed an interest in helping countries of the region develop their economies which resulted in a "very cosy relationship with the US" during the Sadat era, when the



a wave of aggression and terrorism will once again sweep across the Middle East, and will reach across the Atlantic to the US "in one way or the other."

El-Baz disagrees with the view that Israel can dominate or infiltrate the Arab world, "because I don't think that the Arab world is that vulnerable to domination." He said that "greater powers have tried to dominate [but] the fact is the Arab world is not up for grabs." The Israelis must "bear in mind that they should treat the Arabs as equals and forget their theories and concepts of superiority," he added.

Stability and security, El-Baz said, are crucial for building Egypt's economy, improving production, modernising services and absorbing a greater degree of technology. "These are the main challenges," El-Baz asserted, adding that Egypt's national interests are intertwined with regional interests, because peace is a prerequisite for stability and security which will stimulate development and prosperity. "We should not waste our human and natural resources in wars," he stressed.

"To enter the 21st century with optimism and hope," El-Baz noted, "we will definitely have to raise the standard of living." He said that the current figure of less than \$1,000 per capita income per year in some countries in the region will have to be multiplied by three or four in the near future.

Assistance from the outside world will be needed, El-Baz stressed, not only in terms of direct aid, "but in sharing knowledge." Today, "wealth is no longer measured by the value of the natural resources alone. The wealth of nations is measured by the amount of knowledge they possess," El-Baz said, adding that it was not enough "to import knowledge, but what is more important is to be able to create our own technology."

Egypt looks to the US as "our partner in peace and prosperity," El-Baz said, noting that Egypt has taken serious steps in reforming the economy and facilitating investment over the last two years. He called for more American investment because Egypt's "potential has not been tapped" to its full capacity. Egypt wants a "greater volume" of US investments and even though some large American companies are already present in the Egyptian market, "the situation leaves much to be desired," El-Baz added.

He also aspired for an increase in the Egyptian share of the US market, because there is "a wide gap" between the large flow of imports from the US to Egypt and products going the other way. El-Baz further called for more interaction on the cultural level between Egypt and the US.

Although Al-Azhar's opinions on books are not legally binding, police zeal in confiscating a book banned by Al-Azhar has triggered a fury of protest, reports **Omayma Abdel-Latif**

Furore over book seizure

A new row has broken out between Al-Azhar and the Artistic Works Police — an authority which deals with criminal offences in the field of the arts, on the one hand, and supporters of freedom of expression on the other. The controversy follows an Al-Azhar ruling that *The Psychological Analysis of the Prophets*, a book by Abdallah Kamal, a journalist with the weekly magazine *Rose El-Youssef*, should be banned.

The controversy broke out after 3,000 copies of the book were seized by the Artistic Works Police shortly after Al-Azhar's Translation and Publishing Committee said that it should be taken out of circulation because it violated religious laws and norms. The head of the Al-Azhar committee, Sheikh Abdel-Mo'ez Al-Gazzar, confirmed that the committee had reviewed the book and decided it should be banned because it contained insulting remarks about the prophets. He told *Al-Ahram Weekly*: "It has always been accepted that prophets are above criticism and are not to be judged by human terms. But this book went as far as describing prophets, as rebels, which is insulting."

El-Gazzar expressed his concern over "the campaign against Al-Azhar led by some newspapers", and brushed aside their allegations that Al-Azhar encourages extremist thought. In this case, he added, Al-Azhar had acted on the direction of the Artistic Works Police and not on its own initiative.

"We acted upon a request from the police to review the book, but some press reports have made it look as if we are out to get them [intellectuals]," said El-Gazzar. "Al-Azhar is the most prestigious institution in the Islamic world, and we are carrying out our role

of enlightening Muslims the world over. But every time we attempt our task of righting wrongs we get attacked by everybody."

According to the Al-Azhar memorandum sent to the Artistic Works Police, the committee also objected to the portrayal of the prophets on the cover of the book, which, the memorandum said, "runs counter to all accepted norms."

Further affirmation for the committee's position came from Al-Azhar's Grand Sheikh Mohamed Sayed Tantawi, who told a Saudi newspaper last Monday that psychological analysis of prophets is "unacceptable and represents a deviant line of thought which should be corrected."

Earlier this week, police raided the book's printers in Imbaba and confiscated 3,000 copies of the second edition. Nearly 8,000 copies from the first edition had already been sold. Legal sources said the police had acted on their own initiative, without a court order.

For a book to be confiscated, a lawsuit must be filed against its author. If the court approves confiscation, it then authorises the book to be taken out of circulation. But in Kamal's case, he maintains, nothing had been filed against him or his book.

Speaking to the *Weekly*, 31-year-old Kamal blamed the situation on the Artistic Works Police, who had acted without a court order.

"This whole thing is illegal," said Abdallah. "The confiscation of any book should be based on a court order. But instead, the police sent a memo to Al-Azhar asking its committee to review the book and then acted on Al-Azhar's decree. The book has been serialised before without anyone objecting to the content, so why raise the issue now?" he asked. The book is now in the hands of the prosecution authorities, and Kamal said he was awaiting their decision. He would contest the Al-Azhar decree, he added, but did not reveal how he would go about it.

The head of the Artistic Works Police refused to comment, saying only that the issue was under investigation.

In the book, Kamal attempts psychological analyses of various prophets. He argues that the problems which many of the prophets faced in their early lives left scars on their personalities. Most of the prophets, he wrote, suffered the loss of a parent, while Moses suffered from speech difficulties which affected his life and Jesus' seemingly illegitimate birth caused him social problems. Kamal describes Prophet Mohamed as an introvert. He dismisses the argument that subjecting prophets to such analysis is in any way demeaning to their personalities.

According to Article 17 of Law No. 250 issued in 1975, the Islamic Research Centre to which the Al-Azhar committee belongs is responsible for examining all books dealing with Islamic issues and heritage, both to gain scholarly information from them and to correct any wrong information. The law, however, does not stipulate that the committee has the right to order the confiscation of books.

Many intellectuals have urged that Al-Azhar should not be allowed to confiscate books and that its job be confined to reviewing books about the Qur'an or *hadith* (the prophet's sayings). A member of the Egyptian Organisation for Human Rights (EOHR) commented that Al-Azhar's intervention should be

considered as a religious opinion and not a direct order.

"The president has repeatedly stressed that no authority is allowed to confiscate any published material except by court order. Books cannot be confiscated just because of a *fatwa*, which is not mandatory," he said.

"The committee's decree is not mandatory," agreed Abdel-Moneim El-Berri, deputy head of the Faculty of Da'wa (Islamic call), at Al-Azhar University. He told the *Weekly*: "It is up to the government to abide by it or refuse to do so. Al-Azhar should not be part of this controversy at all." According to the law, only the president or the cabinet are allowed to confiscate books without a court order.

Meanwhile, the book's publisher alluded to another story behind the debate. "There is a major conflict of interests between the different publishing houses in Cairo," he said.

Dar Al-Khayal, the three-month-old publishing house which issued the book, has previously published five books which have been the cause of some controversy in the Egyptian book market, he explained. Among them are Fouad Allam's book on the Muslim Brotherhood, security and Sadat, Taslima Nasrin's *The Shame* — also banned by Al-Azhar, and *Agami Girls* by Adel Hammouda.

A source in the publishing industry, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the confiscation of Kamal's book may have been part of a campaign against Al-Khayal, inspired by a rival publishing house.

Enforcing the universality of human rights

The role of the Supreme Constitutional Court in defending

human rights in Egypt will be the

subject of a series of articles, of which this is the first, written by the Court's chief justice, **Awad El-Morr**



Since it was established, the Supreme Constitutional Court has endeavoured to act as an effective guarantor of inalienable human rights. The base of all human rights lies in furthering the dignity of all individuals, irrespective of their race, national, ethnic or social origins, wealth, birth, language, colour or sex. The integrity of the individual is inalienably linked with his or her dignity. Invasion of privacy, exposure to unwarranted seizure or search and the threat of cruel or unusual punishment, all compromise that integrity.

In the vindication of human rights, freedom of expression plays a decisive role, as does the power of judicial review, entitling a court to strike down any legislation in contradiction with the Constitution. But what matters, in the instance of judicial review, is the manner in which power is exercised.

There is no denying that except in a liberal environment human rights can survive neither actively nor adequately. Without the checks and balances implied by a healthy civil society, restrictive or conservative points of view inevitably pose obstacles to any attempts to safeguard human rights and freedoms. It is incumbent on the Court, therefore, to strike a balance between conflicting interests, consolidating the construction of constitutional provisions, viewing as a whole and not in fragments their substantive and procedural aspects while taking into account what was factually envisaged by the framers, without prejudicing the aspirations of ordinary citizens.

The Court is, of course, in no position to rewrite the Constitution; it seeks only to achieve a proper and viable understanding of its contents, without setting aside its mandatory commands. It was in pursuing these aims that the Court delivered a landmark judgement in case no. 22, during the eighth judicial year [1992].

The case concerned an officer in the Egyptian army in Yemen ordered to capture the top of a hill. Afraid to follow orders, his military rank was subsequently lowered by the commander-in-chief of the armed forces. A decree-law was issued, enumerating sanctions to be inflicted on officers in the army while in combat, including the course of action already ordained by the commander-in-chief.

Since all these sanctions were applied retroactively in order to incriminate the act committed by that officer, the validity of the sanction in question was challenged by the petitioner.

In reaching a judgement the Court noted that under Article 187 of the Constitution statutes shall apply as from their time of entry into force. However, a statute whose subject-matter is not of a penal nature may be applied retroactively with the consent of the majority of the People's Assembly members.

Within the lines of this article, criminal statutes are inherently barred from being applied retroactively. Had the sanction in question been of a penal nature, the court would have found no difficulty in striking down the decree-law which directed its enforcement retroactively.

Given that only criminal sanctions are excepted under the Constitution from being applied retroactively, the ordinary meaning of the Constitution's wording would validate the challenged decree-law. But the Court took the opposite view, declaring that the inflicted sanction overstepped constitutional limits. The decision was based on a three-fold consideration.

1. That inherent in the idea of all sanctions is the infliction of pain, be it physical or psychological.

2. That a reading of articles 1 to 3 of the Constitution, which declare the democratic regime as the base of governance and vest sovereignty in the hands of the people — in conjunction with Article 65 which subjects the state to the rule of law — demonstrates that in the vindication of basic human rights and freedoms the content of the rule of law by which the state shall abide is to be outlined in the light of standards and patterns generally recognised by democratic countries.

3. Associated with the applicable standards and criteria in democratic countries is the prohibition on degrading, inhumane, cruel or unusual punishment or treatment; the prevention of restricting personal liberty without the due process of law; and the right not to be twice convicted for the same offence [double jeopardy].

Obviously the above-mentioned rights stem from the due preservation of personal liberty, qualified by the constitution as a natural right. Entailing, the court stated, that all sanctions, irrespective of their nature, are to be applied with immediate effect, and in no way retrospectively.

The importance of this ruling lies in the fact that citizen's rights and freedoms, enumerated by the Constitution or specified by law, are understood as having recognisable international dimensions applicable to all individuals regardless of their territorial location or geographical boundaries.

The broad language used by the court to assert the universal perspective of human rights and freedoms, however, does not imply that national traditions and fundamental values are to be left in abeyance, or to be accorded marginal importance. On the contrary, individuals' rights and freedoms must be interpreted and assessed in the light of an international perspective that does not exclude considerations of morality, religion and patriotism.

Ancient necropolis opened

Archaeology buffs now have another area of interest to visit, reports **Nevine El-Aref**

Dahshur, one of the most important ancient necropolises, which was off-limits to civilians for decades, will be opened to the public by the end of July. Nestled away in a military zone 30km south of Cairo, the ancient city has recently been the subject of major restoration efforts, including paving the neighbouring roads to make it accessible to visitors.

Abdel-Halim Nouredin, secretary-general of the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA), said that Dahshur is one of the most important archaeological sites, and is home to the first complete pyramid honouring King Seneferu, the father of King Khufu and the first king of the Fourth Dynasty. The opening of Dahshur to the public serves to expand the tourist sites in the Giza Plateau, allowing visitors a chance to examine the progressive stages of pyramid construction.

"The site will be completely opened in two phases," said Zahi Hawass, director general of the Giza Plateau. He added that the first phase, which will be completed by the end of July, will open for tourists the two pyramids of King Seneferu. The first pyramid, which is the earliest completed pyramid, is known as the Red Pyramid due to the reddish tint of its iron oxide-rich stones. The second is called the Bent Pyramid due to the changing angle of its sides. "Both the Bent and the Red pyramids provide the historic link between the Step Pyramid at Saqqara and the three Great Pyramids of Giza," stated Hawass.

"All the other pyramids found in the area, which date back to the Middle Kingdom, will also be open to tourists," said Hawass. The Red Pyramid, however, is the only one which visitors can venture into. A limestone staircase has been built outside the pyramid so that visitors can reach its main entrance.

The pyramid has also been heavily restored. The work done on it included cleaning its inner walls and ground, setting up a new lighting system and installing an integrated ventilation system.

The second phase of the opening will come shortly after the first, and includes the opening of the pyramid complexes of the Middle Kingdom such as the Black Pyramid of King Amenemhat II and III, Senusert III and those of their queens and princesses, which were constructed centuries later.

Along with the renovations to the pyramids, the surrounding area has undergone major improvements such as the building of a parking lot, a cafeteria, rest rooms and other services of importance to visitors.

Although Dahshur has been widely recognised as a major historical site, it is also capturing the interest of many of Cairo's professionals, who, drawn by its serenity and the beauty of the surrounding countryside, are beginning to build weekend homes and villas there. In addition, just a few kilometres off the archaeological site, there is a small duck lake where bird-watchers and hunters can spend their leisure time.



photo: Abdel-Wahab El-Sahli

Bibi's wake

The new Israeli prime minister changed no opinions and broke no new ground in Washington. The dye has been cast, writes **James Zogby**, marking the beginning of a dangerous five months

Netanyahu came to the US, but he did not conquer. He left Washington with very few changes in his wake: his supporters still support him; his opponents heard nothing to ease their concerns; and his sceptics remain quite sceptical.

While some Arab commentators were critical of the Israeli prime minister's White House reception, the meeting was hardly a love-fest. The US press coverage is interesting in this regard. One headline commenting on the meeting read, "Face to face, yet far apart," and another, "US and Israeli leaders define differences." Some officials expressed their satisfaction at these headlines and both State Department and White House spokespeople went to great lengths during daily briefing sessions to establish that the US positions on all major issues in the peace process have not changed.

The Clinton administration used the discussion with the Israeli prime minister to lay down several points it views as integral to the momentum of the peace process. The US expects that agreements reached and commitments made be honoured. It is also concerned that Israel avoid provocation on some flash-point issues: Hebron, Jerusalem, settlements, and land confiscation.

The administration also made clear its concern that the Israelis lose no time in implementing agreements and beginning meaningful and substantial discussions with the Palestinian Authority. In public and private, the administration defended the Palestinian Authority and Palestinian President Arafat, whom they see as working to comply with the Oslo Accords and as central to the peace process.

Also on the Palestinian track, the administration made clear that it hopes to see movement on the economic front, noting industrial parks, checkpoints, and the entry-points into Egypt and Jordan as areas where the Israelis can make immediate progress to ease the heavy restrictions on Palestinian commerce.

The Clinton-Netanyahu press conference that followed their private meeting provided some interesting theatre. Netanyahu, addressing his constituency in Israel, was uncompromising on every position. It was clear that he may make some accommodations upon his return — but they will be in his own good time, and in his way.

President Clinton, according to most press reports, appeared to be both cordial and uncomfortable. While pledging continued support for Israel and maintaining his long-standing political commitment to refrain from any public criticism of Israel, his words and behaviour established the fact that there were clear differences between the two leaders. At one point, as Netanyahu discussed settlements, the president grimaced, bringing some laughter from the attending press.

The next day, Netanyahu appeared triumphant before Congress. After an embarrassingly undiplomatic five-minute ovation, Netanyahu remarked that he could not get an ovation like that from his own Knesset. Here, again, there were fascinating scenes to observe. While Congress stood in wild applause over the prime minister's pledge never to see Jerusalem divided, the Secretary of State Warren Christopher sat in cold and clearly unimpressed silence.

The congressional response was expected. Rabin, during his lifetime, had criticised Likud's efforts to organise Congress against the peace process. In 1994, Netanyahu sent what Rabin called "the gang of three" — Likud operatives to set up a lobbying effort to mobilise some elements of the Jewish community and, especially, the Republican leadership in Congress, on several issues designed to weaken the peace process (i.e. Jerusalem, aid to the Palestinians, and the issue of US troops in the Golan Heights).

In large measure, the effects of the "gang of three" were successful and so, in a way, Netanyahu was coming to a "home town" audience that had been prepared for his arrival.

Some Republicans will make an effort to use their relationship with the Likud, their support for its Likud agenda, and Netanyahu's victory as issues in the 1996 campaign. Their goal will be to paint the Clinton administration as too soft in its support for Israel, thereby hoping to deny the Democrats the majority of the Jewish vote they won in the 1992 election.

This was re-emphasised during Netanyahu's New York City visit, where he was greeted by the Republican governors of New Jersey and New York (whose campaign advisor worked on Netanyahu's campaign), the Republican mayor of New York City, and the Republican presidential nominee Bob Dole. After their brief meeting, Dole noted to the press that a Dole administration would be better for Israel, citing his effort on Jerusalem, the increased support he would give to Israel's missile defence system and the greater pressure he would bring to bear on Syria and Iran.

One of the new prime minister's most interesting meetings occurred on Wednesday before an audience of Arab diplomats, journalists, and community leaders. He began his remarks in a most accommodating tone. But during the question and answer period, it became clear that, while the tone was softer, the message was vintage hard-line: on to land for peace, no to the division of Jerusalem, no to recognition of Palestinian nationalism, and a few other no's along the way.

His two meetings in New York with Jewish leaders and the broader community were equally interesting. A poll released by the Israel Policy Forum this week showed that most American Jews (by a two-to-one margin) would have voted for Peres, but with Netanyahu's victory, over sixty per cent, view him favourably and want to give him a chance. At the same time, their support for the peace process is undiminished and they seem willing to give the new prime minister's "go-it-slow" approach a chance.

The prime minister's meetings with the Jewish community reflected those attitudes. Most were simply "star-struck" — an expected reaction. Some of the hard Likud supporters gloated over their victory, while Labour and Peace Now supporters stood by, respectful but somewhat concerned.

The next five months will be dangerous for peace and the people of the Middle East. In the midst of US elections, particularly with Republicans attempting to create a wedge issue over support for Israel, the administration will be cautious in charting its course through new waters. It is clear that the US has sharp policy differences with the new Israeli government and is pressing it to avoid provocation. But it is difficult to know what the US reaction will be if provocation does occur.

Meanwhile, despite any Arab counter-thrust, Likud is making a determined effort to redefine the US policy debate on several Middle East issues.

Propaganda is what Netanyahu does best, and he was in prime form during his visit to Washington. He has long been a master at creating slogans and repeating them often enough that they not only become convincing but agenda-setting ideas. In the new Likud framework, "peace and security" replaces "land for peace." "Reciprocity" means Palestinians must act before Israel acts; Israel alone will determine when Palestinians have acted satisfactorily. "Negotiations with Syria with no preconditions" means that Israel will not leave the Golan, would prefer to see the Syrian regime changed, and will insist that Syria remove "terrorist" groups from Damascus. In reality, the new slogans mean that Israel will not move forward with the peace process.

Finally, in an effort to redefine the US agenda, Likud is once again relying on Congress to carry its load. This, it will be recalled, is what Shamir attempted to do after the Gulf War — only to be upended by then President Bush. Already there is anti-Syria legislation in Congress attempting to punish and isolate that government.

It will be a dangerous five months. The prime minister's visit changed no one's opinion and broke no new ground. The markers have been placed and the lines drawn. Now will come the real tests to see whether or not the peace process can survive in any viable state through November.

The author is president of the Washington-based Arab-American Institute.

Netanyahu's reciprocal peace

For Palestinians, Netanyahu's first foreign foray punctured every hope that had been invested in it, writes **Graham Usher**

the PLO's most senior official in Jerusalem, Faisal Husseini, because what Netanyahu "is saying is that there will be no negotiations on Jerusalem".

But the real chill was caused by Netanyahu's comments on Jewish settlements. In Washington, Netanyahu brandished official Israeli figures which showed that the settler population in the West Bank and Gaza had increased by 50 per cent (from 96,000 in 1992 to 145,000 in 1995) during the tenure of the Rabin-Peres government. "We assume that no one expects us to do less than the Labour government," joked Netanyahu.

Certainly not the settlers in the Occupied Territories. On 14 July, the Council for Jewish Settlements in Judea, Samaria (the West Bank) and Gaza announced that it was presenting plans to the Israeli government to increase the settler population in the West Bank to 300,000-500,000 "over the next four years". When faced with the plans, Netanyahu backed down a little from the bravado he displayed in Washington, but not by much. "We have not yet reached specific decisions," he said. Alarmed by the settlers' hubris and Netanyahu's mooted reaction to it, on 15 July the US hurriedly dispatched a statement reiterating its stand that Jewish settlements are a "complicating problem" in the negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians.

Arafat took these blows on the chin, urging Palestinians to be "patient" ahead of Netanyahu's visit to Egypt on 18 July. But there are signs that even the boundless patience of the PLO leader is starting to wear thin. On 16 July, Arafat pointedly refused to see Netanyahu's chief political advisor, Dore Gold. No reason was given other than the cryptic one given by the Palestinian National Authority's (PNA) residential aide, Nabil Abu Rdaineh. "A meeting between Arafat and Netanyahu is necessary to resume the peace process," he said.

But Arafat's real anxiety is over what increasingly appears to be the guiding principle behind the Likud's approach to the Oslo process. This — expounded at length by Netanyahu in Washington — is less "peace with security" than the Likud notion of "reciprocity". On the Arab peace tracks, reciprocity means that Israel will no longer "accept the idea that peace and terrorism can coexist under one roof", explained Netanyahu in the US. Thus, future negotiations with Syria (for instance) are to be predicated on the cessation of military operations by Hizbullah in occupied South Lebanon. On the Palestinian track, reciprocity means that all progress in the Oslo process is pegged to the PNA remedying alleged and Israeli-defined violations of the peace agreements (there is no mechanism to address Israeli violations).

The beauty of reciprocity for Netanyahu is that it not only allows Israel to wriggle out of international commitments by placing the onus of action or proof on the Arab states and the PNA, it also enables Israel to dictate the pace and the content of the several peace processes. Reciprocity is becoming operative. On 16 July, the Israeli cabinet announced a series of measures to "gradually ease" the closure of the Occupied Territories. But the speed of the lifting — Israel's Defence Minister, Yitzhak Mordechai, told Egyptian Ambassador to Israel, Mohammed Bassiouni, on 15 July — tinged on the PNA maintaining a concerted effort against "terror" in the self-rule areas. Thus should Arafat proceed with a PNA decision taken last week to release around 600 Palestinian detainees from its jails, Israeli army sources have warned that this will be interpreted as Arafat relaxing his grip on Hamas and it may be used as a pretext to keep the closure in place.

How Arafat will deal with reciprocity is unclear. With the Labour government, the PLO leader could always sell his adoption of Israel's security agenda as the necessary price to further the way to a Palestinian state. But, with Likud, statehood is nowhere on the horizon, and what for Israel is defined as reciprocity is experienced by Palestinians as blackmail. And, historically, Palestinians in the Occupied Territories have always had far less patience than their leadership.

Arafat plays waiting game

Yasser Arafat refused to meet top Israeli advisor Dore Gold in Gaza this week. Instead, he will let President Mubarak present Palestinian demands to Netanyahu today, writes **Tarek Hassan** from Gaza

Palestinian President Yasser Arafat this week turned down an Israeli proposal to meet Binyamin Netanyahu's chief political advisor, Dore Gold, in Gaza to discuss Palestinian demands ahead of the Israeli prime minister's visit to Egypt.

Arafat could not accept such an offer, as he had to stress the fact that Palestinian positions to be discussed during President Mubarak's meeting with Netanyahu today in Alexandria had to be coordinated with Egypt and not Israel. Arafat himself ended a visit to Cairo last Monday where he had extensive talks with Mubarak, Osama El-Baz, the Egyptian president's political advisor, and Foreign Minister Amr Moussa.

The Israeli offer to dispatch Dore Gold to Gaza must have come as a disappointment to Arafat, who received Gold some weeks ago at his residence in Gaza and told him, in the presence of chief Palestinian negotiator Mahmoud Abbas (better known as Abu Mazen): "You are an academic. You do not know us well enough, neither do you know how to deal with us. You have to stop sending people with a theoretical understanding of the Palestinians."

The suggestion to send Gold once again this week shows one of two things: Netanyahu did not get Arafat's message, or he chose to ignore it. Either way, the one sure thing is that Palestinians feel that a very difficult stage lies ahead for them and that their only hope is today's meeting between Mubarak and Netanyahu. Palestinians see the encounter as the final test of Netanyahu's willingness to offer a glimmer of hope of some progress along the Palestinian-Israeli track.

Arafat's latest round of meetings in Cairo this week has resulted in a working paper of 10 Palestinian demands that can get the peace process going once again. A top Palestinian official source told *Al-Ahram Weekly* that the most important items on this document are as follows:

—Demanding that Israel must show commitment to the framework of the peace process represented by the principle of land-for-peace and UN resolutions 242 and 338.

—Insisting that the Palestinians have carried out their obligations as stipulated in the accords and that reciprocity means that the Israelis must complete theirs, including redeployment in Hebron, a safe passage between Gaza and the West Bank, and the second stage of redeployment in West Bank villages.

In this context, the Palestinians reject Netanyahu's proposal to link geographically settler areas in the centre of Hebron with the Kiyat Arba settlement and the Ibrahim Mosque. Instead, the Palestinians want the road linking Kiyat Arba with the centre of the city to be controlled by joint Palestinian-Israeli security patrols, rather than by the Israelis exclusively.

—Safeguarding Palestinian institutions in Jerusalem.

—Halting settlement construction programmes.

—Resuming the final-status talks.

—Drawing up a time schedule for



Israeli soldiers in front of a car covered with slogans protesting the evacuation of Jahalin Bedouin from their land by Israeli authorities near Maale Adumim settlement in Jerusalem (photo: AFP)

fulfilling obligations stipulated in the agreement, especially with regard to political prisoners and the safe passage.

Lifting many of the restrictions imposed on the Palestinians, including the economic blockade and the military siege.

There seems to be complete agreement between the Palestinians and the Egyptians on all these items, and it is almost certain that when Mubarak meets Netanyahu today in Alexandria he will discuss these issues with him. Whether Netanyahu will have something positive to say on any of these fronts is something that remains to be seen. The most positive thing he can offer is to show willingness to discuss all these issues directly with Arafat.

It is no secret that Netanyahu's Foreign Minister David Levy is trying to bring about a meeting between Arafat and Netanyahu, and that the latter has so far been very cagey on the subject. Nabil Abu Rdaineh, the Palestinian National Authority's presidential aide, however, believes that this meeting will take place eventually although he does not know when or where.

One person Israeli Arafat is more likely to meet in the near future is Meretz Party leader Yossi Sarid, who Palestinian sources say has asked to come to Gaza to bring a message of support to Arafat from the camp of the doves in Israel. This in itself is revealing.

Battle to defend Orient House

When he holds his first ever meeting with visiting Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu in Cairo today, President Hosni Mubarak is expected to present him with a list of Palestinian demands. Prominent among these is the demand that the Israeli government cease its attempts to close down Orient House, the headquarters of the Palestinian delegation to the peace talks and the symbol of Palestinian political presence in Arab East Jerusalem.

Hours before Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu arrives in Egypt for talks with President Hosni Mubarak, Faisal Al-Husseini, the Palestinian negotiator responsible for Jerusalem telephoned Osama El-Baz, Mubarak's chief political advisor, to urge Egypt to include the issue of Orient House on the agenda of talks, a top aide of Al-Husseini told *Al-Ahram Weekly*. Husseini was reassured that Egypt planned to raise the issue in the Mubarak-Netanyahu talks.

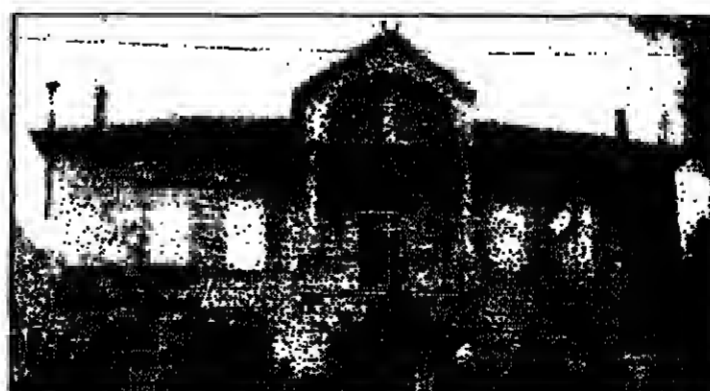
Last March, the outgoing Israeli government used a 1980 Knesset law, under which it officially annexed East Jerusalem, to prohibit the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) from operating in the building that it claims lies on Israeli territory. The new Likud government has been tougher in following this policy.

During his recent visit to the United States, Netanyahu unveiled his own conditions for the resumption of peace talks. Heading the list was the closure of the offices of all the "Palestinian institutions operating from within Jerusalem, on the top of which comes Orient House."

The Israeli government says that the Palestinians' hosting of talks with visiting foreign dignitaries in Orient House is a violation of Israeli-Palestinian agreements. The declaration of principles, signed in 1993, bans the Palestinian self-rule authority from conducting activity in the Holy City until its future is determined in final status negotiations.

Israel's hardline government informed foreign diplomats that a visit to Orient House will deny them official welcome in Israel. Furthermore,

Palestinians and Arabs are resolved that Orient House will not be shut down, and that their road to Jerusalem will remain open. **Sherine Bahaa** reports



Israeli police have enforced tight security measures around the house. These measures, "have hindered Palestinian citizens and foreign visitors, who are mostly peace advocates, from entering the house," Rami Tahboub, Orient House spokesman, told *the Weekly*.

Last week, Israel notified French Minister of Foreign Affairs Hervé de Charette that he should not schedule a visit to the house during his trip to the region planned for later this week. In response, the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs declared that de Charette will freely decide his own schedule.

Meanwhile, Israeli authorities summoned for questioning seven members of parliament in Jerusalem for participating in PNA activities from inside Jerusalem. Hassan Ashrawi, minister of higher education, and Ahmed Korei, speaker of the Palestinian parliament, who were among the seven, were infuriated by the decision and described it as a violation of Palestinian rights.

Palestinian President Yasser Arafat has rejected the Israeli attempts to shut down the house. He reiterated the fact that Orient House is the main headquarters of the Palestinian del-

egation to the peace negotiations.

Palestinian institutions which are not directly connected with the PNA are still permitted to function in Jerusalem. The Palestinians insist that Orient House falls under this category. "They do not have the right to halt the house's activities. It is an old mansion that operated during the time of [the last] Likud government, and before and after Oslo [signed in 1993] up till the present day," Faisal Al-Husseini, the Palestinian negotiator responsible for the issue of Jerusalem in the peace talks, told *the Weekly*.

It was in the Orient House that former US Secretary of State James Baker held talks with Ashrawi and Al-Husseini, in their capacity as members of the Palestinian delegation to the Madrid peace conference.

In a letter to Joergen Holst, the late Norwegian foreign minister in 1993, then Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres assured Holst, who was acting as the chief mediator of the Oslo Accords, that he would allow Palestinian institutions in the city to continue operating. However, the Likud government denies that it is bound by the contents of this letter, saying they do not form

part of the Oslo Accords.

This new controversy over Orient House is yet another aspect to perhaps the most contentious issue that Palestinian and Israeli negotiators face: the final status of Jerusalem. "The issue of Jerusalem is supposed to be discussed now in the final status talks. But by such a decision, Israel is annulling all that has been achieved; things will go back to what they were like before the peace process, i.e. a state of war. The closure of Orient House is a clear message that Jerusalem is not part of the peace process," Al-Husseini said.

Palestinians say Israel has worked ever since its occupation of East Jerusalem in the June 1967 War, to Judaize the Arab city — by increasing its Jewish population, erasing the city's Palestinian character and neglecting its infrastructure. "They will always try to Judaize Jerusalem and recent measures against Orient House are one step along that road," said Al-Husseini. "However, the deeply rooted Palestinian character of Jerusalem and the attachment of Palestinians to their land, in addition to Arab and international support, will all help us in this confrontation."

Israel attempts to erase the Palestinian Arab character of East Jerusalem have been relentless. Successive Israeli administrations, whether Labour or Likud, have forced Palestinians to leave their land and encouraged tens of thousands of Jews to inhabit settlements specially erected around East Jerusalem. The settlements, looking much like the newer areas of West Jerusalem, symbolise the siege under which the Arab areas of the ancient city have been placed.

"The Palestinian voice from Orient House calls for peace and for the Arab part of Jerusalem to be the religious, political and economic capital of an independent Palestinian state. This voice will not be silenced whatever the wishes of right-wing Israeli hawks," said Tahboub.

Turkey reassures Arabs

President Mubarak's visit to Ankara last week succeeded in easing tensions in Arab-Turkish relations. Khaled Lawoud reviews the results of the visit

President Hosni Mubarak's visit to Turkey last week came amidst a flurry of intense Egyptian diplomatic activity aimed at bolstering the Arab position in the Middle East peace process and face up to the extremism of the new Israeli government.

The headline statements of newly elected right-wing Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and particularly the ones made during his visit to Washington which ended on Sunday, have apparently convinced Arab countries that they urgently need to coordinate their positions if they are to pressure Israel into adherence to what the Arabs and Israelis have already agreed upon.

Arab leaders are also aware, as was reflected in the final statement of the Cairo Arab Summit issued on 21 June, that in order to concentrate on the central issue of negotiations with Israel, they should try to neutralise conflicts with their non-Arab neighbours, particularly Turkey and Iran.

Signs of deterioration in Turkish-Arab relations emerged following the signing of a military agreement between Ankara and Tel Aviv earlier this year. The agreement was sharply criticised by Syria which succeeded in rallying Arab support to collectively call upon Turkey to reconsider the accord.

Arab suspicions towards Turkey increased further following Western reports that the military agreement was part of a projected military pact which would include Turkey, Israel and Jordan. But President Mubarak's visit to Turkey managed to put an end to much of the controversy concerning this issue.

Following his talks with Turkish President Suleiman Demirel, Mubarak announced in a joint press conference that he was convinced the military agreement was not part of a wider pact and was not directed against any Arab country. He endorsed the Turkish stand that the agreement was to provide joint training for pilots from Israel and Turkey and that Ankara had signed many similar agreements with other countries.

Asked if Turkey had agreed to Arab demands to reconsider its agreement with Israel, Mubarak said: "President Demirel confirmed to me that his country would not get involved in any anti-Arab alliance and would not establish a pact against any country. What I understood and was convinced of is that military agreements like the one with Israel were signed with many countries and are aimed at training."

Turkish sources in Ankara were quoted by news agencies as saying that they had not ruled out the possibility that President Mubarak was given the chance to look at a copy of the Turkish-Israeli agreement to calm Arab fears. Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Moussa made a visit to Turkey last month and was presented with the same assurances by Turkish officials. Nonetheless, Mubarak had said before his visit to Ankara that the picture remained unclear to him. Mubarak's affirmation last week that the military agreement was not the forerunner of a more wide-ranging pact indicated he had received strong evidence from Turkish officials to this effect.

Shortly before Mubarak's visit, most Arab countries, including Syria,

expressed optimism that a breakthrough would be achieved in Turkish-Arab relations following the accession of Necmettin Erbakan, leader of the pro-Islamist Welfare Party, to the post of prime minister of Turkey in a coalition government. Erbakan has for a long time expressed his desire to improve relations with Syria and, indeed, all Arab and Muslim countries.

Although Erbakan heavily toned down his strong criticism of Turkey's close link to the Western NATO military alliance after assuming office, in line with the conditions agreed upon with his coalition partner, the liberal Ansu Ciller, he is still expected to work on developing Turkey's relations with Arab and Muslim countries.

The Syrian ambassador to Ankara was the first representative of a foreign country's co-governance. Erbakan on his new position and, one day after Mubarak's visit, Turkish newspapers published reports confirming that a delegation from the Welfare Party had visited Damascus to prepare for a visit by the Turkish premier.

Moussa, who accompanied Mubarak on his visit to Ankara, has even indicated that contacts are already being made between Syria and Turkey in an attempt to resolve their differences. Asked if Egypt was mediating between the two countries, Moussa replied that Cairo was ready to perform such a role. "But I believe Turkey is ready and so is Syria



President Hosni Mubarak, left, shakes hands with Turkish Chief of Staff Gen. Ismail Karadayi as Turkey's Islamist-oriented new premier Necmettin Erbakan looks on, during a welcoming ceremony for Mubarak in Ankara last Thursday (photo AP)

to improve relations, and I do not think they need mediation," he said.

During his meeting with Mubarak, the Turkish president complained bitterly about the support Syria provides Kurdish rebels in Turkey, particularly the Kurdistan Workers' Party led by Abdullah

Oglan. "The leading terrorist [Oglan] can be found in Syria. He lives there," Demirel said in his joint news conference with Mubarak. "Syria should stop its support for the terrorists. This is our demand and we have raised this issue to the talks with my brother President Mubarak."

While being harsh on what he labelled "terrorism", Demirel sounded more understanding on the issue of water, another major point of dispute between Syria and Turkey. He said Turkey had no intention to cut off Syria's share of water from the Euphrates river and that this issue should not negatively affect re-

lations between the two countries.

Officials from Syria and Turkey, as well as Iraq, are expected to resume meetings soon to discuss the water issue. They have expressed optimism that an understanding can be reached between the three sides.

Gaddafi's goodwill gesture

Libya's latest warm gestures towards the French may trigger a conflict of interests among western powers, reports Rasha Saad

A significant shift in Libyan diplomacy occurred last week when French magistrate Jean-Louis Bruguiere, a specialist in terrorism, was welcomed by Libyan authorities to investigate the bombing of a French airliner over the Sahara desert in September 1989.

Tripoli had turned away Bruguiere in 1992 when he arrived aboard a French warship. This time, after the magistrate flew to the Tunisian island of Djerba before continuing by road to Tripoli, Libyan authorities permitted him to probe the destruction of the French UTA airline's DC-8 in which 170 people were killed.

The destruction of the UTA airliner occurred at the height of tension between France and Libya over Chad, where the two countries' armies clashed repeatedly in the 1970s and 1980s. Chad, a former French colony, asked Paris several times for help to fight incursions by Libyan-backed forces.

In 1991, Bruguiere issued four international arrest warrants for Abdullah Senoussi, the brother-in-law of Libyan President Muammar Gaddafi; Abdullah Elazragh, a diplomat who was posted in Brazzaville at the time of the bombing; and secret service officers Ibrahim Naeef and Musbah Arabas.

The UN Security Council imposed an air embargo and arms and diplomatic sanctions on Libya for its refusal to turn over suspects wanted in connection with the UTA blast and the 1988 bombing of PanAm flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland, which killed 270 people. Libya argues that there is no extradition treaty

with any of the countries involved in the bombings.

But recent developments are believed to portend similar developments in the Lockerbie track.

In a telephone interview with Al-Ahram Weekly from his office in Tripoli, Ibrahim Legwell, the lawyer of the two Libyan suspects in the Lockerbie bombing, expressed his hope that the latest Libyan initiative will have a positive impact on the Lockerbie issue. "The Libyan side proved its goodwill and accepted the visit of the French magistrate on the principle of judicial mandate," he said. "We hope that the same principle can be applied with the US and the UK concerning the Lockerbie issue. Meanwhile, we are looking for a neutral country to host the trial." He added.

Earlier this month, South Africa offered to host the trial of the two Libyan suspects. Jim Swire, spokesman for the UK relatives of the Lockerbie victims, confirmed the families' agreement. The Arab League also offered to hold the trial in the UN International Court of Justice in The Hague with Scottish judges enforcing Scottish laws. Both suggestions were rejected by the US and the UK which insist on holding the trial either in Scotland or the US.

Hassan Nafe'a, a professor of political science at Cairo University, said that if Libya is able to convince France of its innocence in the UTA bombing, there would be a breakthrough on the Lockerbie track.

"The solidarity among France, UK and the US is a powerful front against Libya. If Libya is able to create a divide between the three parties there will be little fear of any intensification of the sanctions. Moreover, in the future it might persuade France to support lifting the sanctions," Nafe'a said.

Gaddafi's goodwill gesture towards the French may be interpreted as the first step towards solving the Lockerbie issue while securing Libya's sovereignty, said Abdel-Samir Zeineddin, an Egyptian diplomat. "The flexible attitude which Libya showed towards France is a practical example that is in line with the Libyan approach to the Lockerbie issue. The fact that Libya agreed to receive the French magistrate, rather than extraditing the four suspects, demonstrated Libya's insistence on its sovereignty," he explained.

Nafe'a believes that France is convinced that the US is manipulating the latest developments in the Middle East for its own benefit. He gave the example of the second Gulf war when France joined the US-led forces against Iraq. According to Nafe'a, France felt the US reaped most of the benefits of that alliance. This feeling was intensified once Jacques Chirac became president of France and adopted a Gaullist policy of independence, Nafe'a added.

The independent French stance was very clear when Paris supported the Arabs during the latest Israeli aggression on Lebanon and the Qana massacre. It was also clear in its dealing with the Libyan issue.

Now that the right-wing Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu is Israel's Prime Minister, Arabs are reorganising their ranks — another reason why France is reassessing its Arab interests.

Farouq Abu Eissa, head of the Arab Lawyers Federation, stressed that the Lockerbie issue is a political rather than a legal one. He added that Libya is the victim of the conflict of interests between Europe and the US.

"The US, which monopolises most of the oil in the region, wants a reserve stock and it would like to maintain an advantage over the European countries," Abu Eissa stated.

Abu Eissa criticised US attempts to prevent European countries from dealing with Libya under the UN sanctions while it does not obstruct American companies from pursuing relations with Libya.

"US companies seek to monopolise the Libya market so that when Libya surrenders to the pressure of the sanctions, the US will have the upper hand," he explained.

The Arab Lawyers Federation has backed the Libyans on the Lockerbie issue from the beginning. It established an executive bureau in Cairo to supervise developments in the issue.

The Federation will be holding a seminar in London to "clarify Libya's legal position and expand the circle of sympathisers and supporters of the Libyans to end their suffering under the sanctions."

Israeli poll

TWO-THIRDS of Israelis still support the Middle East peace process, according to a monthly poll conducted by the Peace Research Centre at Tel Aviv University. The June poll found that 63.3 per cent of Israelis were in favour of the peace process, the same figure as in April and only slightly lower than May.

The results reflect a marked and surprising stability in Israeli public opinion towards the peace process, despite the political upheaval brought about by recent elections. The poll also showed solid support for the accords which launched Palestinian autonomy: 53 per cent were in favour while 55 per cent believed Palestinian claims for an independent state were justified. However, fewer believed the Israeli-Palestinian talks would lead to such a state.

Lebanon election

CHRISTIAN opposition leaders, who boycotted Lebanese legislative elections in 1992, called for massive participation in next month's elections and said past mistakes should not be repeated.

A statement read after a five-hour meeting on Tuesday of 52 Christian Maronite MPs, former cabinet ministers and public figures stressed that the boycott had failed to achieve its objectives. The boycott was mainly in protest Syria's influence over Lebanon, where Damascus maintains 35,000 troops.

Last week Parliament approved a new electoral law.

New sanctions

THE US SENATE passed a bill on Tuesday penalising foreign businesses that invest in Iran or Libya, two countries included in the State Department's list of nations supporting international terrorism. The US has already imposed a unilateral trade boycott on these two countries.

The bill, supported by the Clinton administration, outlines sanctions to be imposed on foreign firms that invest over \$40 million in the fields of weapons production, oil industries or aviation capabilities in the two countries.

The proposed sanctions include denying export licenses, barring US banks loans of over \$10 million a year to sanctioned parties and banning US government procurement of goods and services from the sanctioned companies.

Shifting troops

THE US Defense Department was expected to move substantial numbers of its troops in Saudi Arabia to a base it considers easier to defend against terrorist attacks.

A Pentagon spokesman said the plan, which comes in the aftermath of a second bombing that killed 19 Americans at a US military housing complex in Dhahran on 25 June, was under discussion within the US Central Command and with the Saudi officials. The spokesman said the US received assurances of full Saudi cooperation in protecting US troops, but did not refer to a statement by the Saudi defense minister objecting to the move of around 5,000 US troops stationed in Saudi Arabia.

Who will finance the relocation is yet to be determined. A second complication is that US troops based in Riyadh and urban areas vulnerable to terrorist attacks are the hardest to move.

Another bad year

Despite some positive constitutional and legal developments, human rights violations in the region are still a fact of life. Amira Howaidy reviews this year's AOHHR report

Last December Kuwait signed the Convention Against Torture, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Meanwhile, two other Arab countries abolished their state security courts and another six passed general and specific amnesties which resulted in the release of several thousand political prisoners.

These were among the more positive developments cited by the 1995-96 report of the Arab Organisation for Human Rights (AOHR). Not all is rosy for human rights in the Arab world, however, according to the 336-page report.

The report's overall conclusions point to a continuous deterioration of legal safeguards, gross violations of human rights, the escalation of violence and counter-violence and more restrictions imposed on a number of basic freedoms in a large number of countries in the Arab world.

Since both 1995 and 1996 have been election years in many Arab countries, the

report monitored the various electoral and constitutional amendments which were enforced to favour the perpetuation of the status quo in the ballot.

In Algeria, prior to the presidential elections, 20 new clauses were added to the electoral law, depriving various potential candidates from nominating themselves. Last December, Sudanese President Omar Bashir ratified a constitutional decree stipulating that the president is to be elected from a number of candidates by direct popular vote and that the winner must gain more than half of the votes cast. In preparation for the upcoming Lebanese election, a constitutional amendment extends the presidential term for another three years.

The results of most elections in the region, said the report, have only affirmed a monopoly of power and facilitated the retreat from political plurality to a one-party system in practice, even in Arab countries that have officially abandoned monopoly politics.

"The electoral processes in most of these elections were tainted with various types

of vote-rigging or influencing the results in advance in order to subvert the true will of the electorate," according to the AOHHR report.

Palestinian council elections were held in the self-rule areas, under the ceiling of the Oslo agreement, depriving a large number of Palestinians living in exile (more than 54 per cent) from practicing their right to participate, the report noted. Sudanese elections were held under a comprehensive ban on political parties and a total absence of constitutional procedures. And the AOHHR monitored a very violent electoral process in Egypt which resulted in the killing of 50 people and the wounding of approximately 200 more.

But, the report emphasised that the most vicious violation of the year remains the Israeli aggression against Lebanon and the massacres perpetrated against civilians in southern Lebanon, especially in the village of Qana which resulted in the killing of more than 200 men, women and children. The report also documented the continuing forced occupation of Arab land in Syria

and Lebanon and the violation of the rights of civilians in the occupied areas.

A special section of the report is devoted to the rights of the Palestinian people which have "continued to be severely abused by the Israeli occupation authority" which "blatantly refuses to acknowledge the Palestinian right of return while it promotes Israeli settlement, violates international humanitarian law, and runs roughshod over Israeli obligations under the self-rule agreement."

The report noted that Israel has continued to assassinate leaders of the Palestinian resistance abroad — namely Fathi El-Shaqqa and Yehia Ayyash.

Another concern voiced by the report is the increase of violence and terrorism by political groups propagating Islamist slogans. This reached its peak in Algeria where semi-official sources place the number of victims at 50,000 since the outbreak of violence in 1992.

In Egypt, the confrontation between the security forces and the armed militant Islamist groups claimed 280 lives, a 25

per cent increase from the previous year.

The aggravation of the confrontation between governments and militant opposition groups went hand-in-hand with an increase in gross violations of a number of other basic rights. The AOHHR pointed out that in a number of Arab countries, detention campaigns and the incidence of torture increased both as a means to force confessions and as retribution against political opposition.

In its conclusion, the report emphasises, as it does every year, the dangerous conditions in which human rights activists in the Arab World must operate. There are few safeguards for such people as Arab regimes continue to hinder a proposed international declaration on the legal obligations of governments to respect human rights work and uphold the rights of human rights activists.

For the third report running, the AOHHR expressed its sorrow for the "involuntary disappearance" of Mansour El-Kikha, a member of its board of trustees, more than two and a half years ago.

beaten by unidentified assailants.

"In all cases," says the report, "it is unacceptable as it relates in tuggery and the practice of reckless violence which contradicts the law, order and human rights."

Palestinian journalists, on the other hand, suffer from the "brutality" of the Israeli occupation, the report says, especially in limiting their movement. Reporters in the Arab occupied territories are frequently subject to siege, the "cruelest forms of censorship and difficult political, legal, professional and security laws."

This was especially evident during the election campaign that preceded the Israeli elections in May when the occupation forces prevented Palestinian journalists from entering Jerusalem where most of their headquarters are based. The APU points out that these practices continued and even escalated after the victory of the right-wing Likud party "led

JOURNALISTS in several Arab states are suffering from the detrimental effects of recently-passed legislation restricting press freedoms. This has alarmed both the Arab Organisation for Human Rights (AOHR) and the Arab Press Union (APU).

Last week APU issued a report which monitored the recent "escalation" of "attacks" against Arab journalists. The report listed six countries, namely Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait, Jordan and Palestine, which the APU charged both "hindered the freedom of the press" and threatened Arab journalists.

While the lives of Algerian reporters remain threatened, says the report, the Algerian press suffers from the risen printing costs, thus disturbing the printing process of newspapers.

A more severe case was the sudden decision taken by the Qatari government to ban Al-Sharq daily newspaper. The paper was banned because of a

reports which the authorities considered "harmful to a neighbouring country." Al-Sharq published an article three weeks ago which referred to Saudi Arabia.

The Kuwaiti government, according to APU, took similar measures when it withdrew the weekly newspaper Al-Sabbah's licence without revealing the reasons, "triggering alarm for the margin of freedom the Kuwaiti press enjoys which had previously distinguished it from the regional press," the report said.

In the case of Egypt and Jordan, press laws have been passed by the parliaments of both countries without the consultation or approval of journalists. In Egypt, Press Law 93 was only abolished after the personal intervention of President Hosni Mubarak. But, the report warns, the "unrestrained" violence against reporters was repeated when Magdi Hussein, editor-in-chief of

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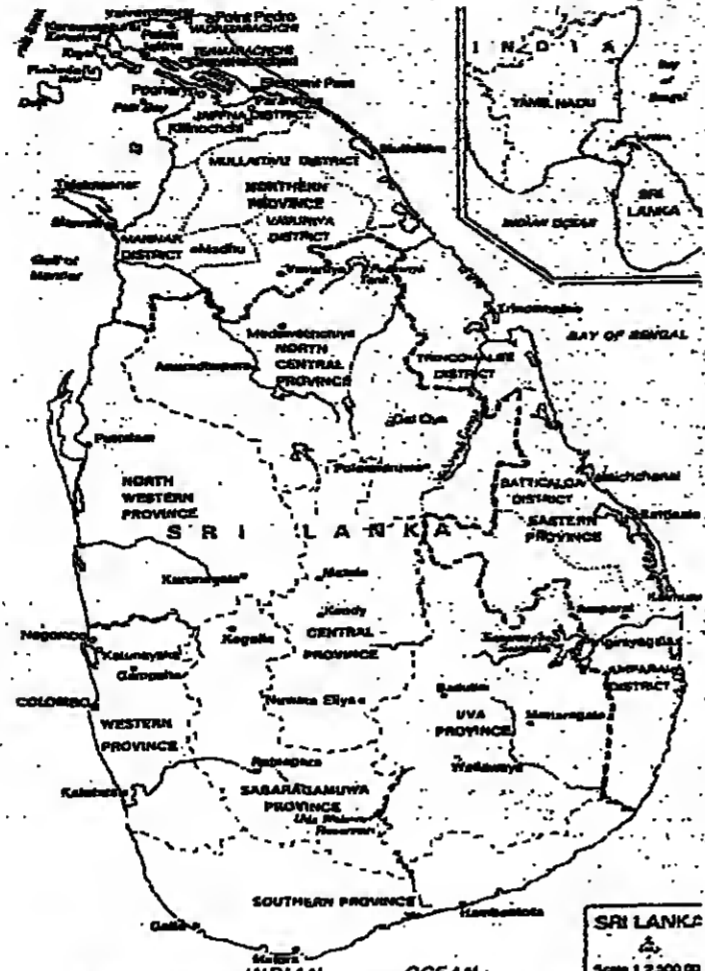
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Press freedoms thwarted

Rendezvous with history

Sirimavo Ratwatte Bandaranaike is more than an icon of a bygone age. She is a comforting presence in today's post Cold War world. Bandaranaike is a symbol of continuity in rapidly changing times. All her peers, the founding fathers of the Non-Aligned Movement, are long gone. She has survived politically over the decades and is spearheading the fight for peace in her war-torn island-nation. In Colombo, Sri Lanka's octogenarian Prime Minister spoke to Gamal Nkrumah



Sri Lanka's ethnic Tamils are predominant in the north and east



Bandaranaike with the late President Gamal Abdel-Nasser in Cairo in 1963

"Mother knows best." So stated Sirimavo Bandaranaike categorically in an exclusive interview with Al-Ahram Weekly. In 1960 she became the world's first elected woman prime minister. Last year, she became the world's first prime minister to serve under her own daughter — Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga. The Indian Ocean island is facing exceptionally trying times. Sri Lanka has been battling Tamil Tiger separatists in the north and east of the island since 1983. Mother and daughter often react differently to the Tamil Tigers' snarls. But they both understand that tigers are most dangerous when cornered. Using both carrots and sticks to quell the Tamil Tigers' insurrection is Kumaratunga's instinctive strategy of political survival. She insists, with her mother's backing, on a political solution. But there are any in her government and among her compatriots who yearn for a decisive military conclusion to finish off the Tamil Tigers.

"When you come, we hide; when you stop, we harass; when you are in trouble, we attack; when you run, we follow." So went Mao Zedong's maxim. It was a strategy adopted by leftist guerrilla fighters the world over. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), the Tamil Tigers for short, adopted Mao's tactics in their protracted armed struggle with the Sri Lankan central authorities for the creation of a separate Tamil nation-state in the Northern and Eastern provinces of the Indian Ocean island. The Tamil Tigers have been fighting since 1983 for a separate homeland — Tamil Eelam. The LTTE has been the Achilles' heel of several democ-

ically elected Sri Lankan governments — and that includes Sirimavo Bandaranaike's.

The Tigers' adept skills at guerrilla warfare are proverbial and exceptional — so much so that the government forces are now imitating their Maoist tactics. Sure enough, for the first time in 13 years, the central government seems to have the upper hand in the war with the Tigers. The Sri Lankan Armed Forces stormed the Tamil Tigers' strongholds in the Northern Province after a series of intensive military operations that began last October. Last December, the Tigers fled the 2,340 square kilometre Jaffna Peninsula. On Sunday, they staged their most ferocious attack against the Sri Lankan army in Jaffna since it fell to government forces. The Tigers' pre-dawn attack berailed a return to their notorious hit-and-run tactics.

Sri Lankan Prime Minister Sirimavo Ratwatte Bandaranaike is confident that Sri Lanka is over the worst. "Everything is under control. We have managed to contain the war. But we do not have full peace yet," she assured. "What we now want is peace. We must have peace to accelerate the development of our country. There are still some problems and we are trying to settle these problems through negotiations. You must understand that it is very difficult to talk to the LTTE. It is almost impossible. We are trying hard to persuade them to do that. We have put forward new proposals based on a devolution package. They want the Northern and Eastern provinces separated from the rest of the island. We can't have that. We are against the division of our country."

Bandaranaike outlined her government's new dev-

olution package. "We acknowledge that Sri Lanka is a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual pluralistic society. But we are a small island. Sri Lanka must remain a united island to be economically viable. We shall have nine new regional councils to facilitate the devolution of power to the provinces," she explained. But the Tamils of northern and eastern Sri Lanka want still more power to be devolved to the provinces. Under the new constitution, Sri Lanka is perceived as an "indivisible union of regions" — a phrase ingeniously borrowed from the Australian Constitution. The Sri Lankan premier was adamant that the new dispensation will create peace and harmony.

One cannot give a broad-brush summary of Bandaranaike's long life and chequered political career. True, she is often celebrated as the world's first woman prime minister, and in the Third World, her name evokes the ideals of a golden age — the national liberation era. Above all, Bandaranaike is a survivor. In a summary sari of pink and baby blue with intricate floral patterns, Bandaranaike looked the picture of health when I met her in her official residence, Rosemead Place. There were no signs of the stroke that rendered her bed-ridden for a couple of months two years ago. Except for a bandaged right foot, thanks to an ill-advised visit to a homeopathic medical practitioner in Singapore last year, she is in fine health.

Bandaranaike's gestures betray a rare clarity of mind, a zest for life and an admirable political acumen exceptional for a woman in her eighties. Unlike the other founding fathers of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), Egypt's Gamal Abdel-Nasser, Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah, Indonesia's Ahmed Sukarno, India's Nehru and Yugoslavia's Josip Broz Tito, she is still in office. The crowning of her unflinching efforts for the promotion of NAM came in 1976, when Bandaranaike was unanimously elected chairman of the Summit Conference of Non-Aligned Nations. Bandaranaike's name was proposed by the late president of Egypt, Anwar Sadat, the late president of Cyprus, Archbishop Makarios, and India's late Premier Indira Gandhi. For the very first time NAM was headed by a woman.

Bandaranaike has never had the acerbity and ice-cold aloofness of Indira Gandhi, the stiness and insincerity of Golda Meir, the malevolence and mendacity of Margaret Thatcher, or even the glamour and feminine mystique of Benazir Bhutto. Brisk and business-like, Bandaranaike is above all a practical and professional politician. She knows when to step onto centre stage and when to bow out gracefully. She also knows how to draw the applause.

She has been through rough times, always emerging stronger than ever. It is said that her stroke was directly related to her quarrel with her only son, Anura. He had joined the opposition United National Party (UNP). UNP leader and former Premier Ranil Wickremesinghe has warned that his party does not favour the federal arrangement envisaged in Kumaratunga's peace deal and has threatened to pull out of the multi-party parliamentary panel studying the constitutional reforms.

Bandaranaike would have been a happier woman had she had her son by her side. But Bandaranaike is not a woman who succumbs to self-pity. She has an iron will. It was at the instigation of former Sri Lankan President Julius Richard Jayewardene that all her legitimate civic rights were withdrawn for seven long years. Today her son is a back-bench member of the Sri Lankan parliament, always opposing his mother and his sister, President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga. Anura's insubordination to his mother has been one of the most trying of Bandaranaike's many tribulations.

Bandaranaike puts much of the present economic troubles of Sri Lanka down to the regime of former President Ranasinghe Premadasa and his predecessor Jayewardene. She also sees Premadasa's initial arming of the Tamil Tigers as a *faux pas*. "We are still suffering the ill effects of Premadasa's foolish and rash decision," she said. In the war zone, and in the island at large, mafias and criminal rackets encouraged illegal *kissippan*, or moonshine distillation of liquor and marijuana cultivation, and the black economy boomed.

Inter-communal tensions erupted in the '70s, culminating in the July and August 1983 anti-Tamil riots which broke out sporadically throughout Sri Lanka. Communal tensions have been furthered by

Sinhalese chauvinists and thousands of both Tamil and Sinhalese people were driven from their homes. The Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), a former Marxist-Leninist organisation which turned into a Sinhalese ultra-nationalist paramilitary group in the late 1970s, was the main instigator of the violence. It was in this context that the UNP swept to victory in 1977. Janaka Sena Sangaramaya (JSS), or the National Workers' Organisation, was yet another Sinhalese-dominated socialist-oriented group that metamorphosed into an anti-Tamil militant force. Sri Lanka's Tamils bow the JSS and the JVP as the main perpetrators of the indiscriminate anti-Tamil violence which undermined the multi-ethnic society in Sri Lanka.

Kumaratunga has come under intense pressure from her mainly Sinhalese constituency in bringing the war to an end by imposing a military conclusion on the Tigers. Her mother knows that not only must the war be won, but peace must be won. How does she advise her president/daughter? "Learn from your mother's mistakes," he chuckled. "That is my advice to my daughter."

Kumaratunga's military offensive in the Northern Province and Jaffna Peninsula in December was followed last week by a south offensive in the Eastern Province. The Tamils of Jaffna and Trincomalee in the Eastern Province have few affiliations to the Jaffna Tamils of the Northern Province. The very names Batticaloa and Trincomalee are evocative of the island's most exotic tourist haunts. Last week, the Tigers infiltrated the country's largest game reserve, the Yala National Park. A Tamil Tiger suicide bombing of the Central Bank in Colombo on 31 January, killing 91 people, has seriously affected tourism with many tour operators keeping away from the Indian Ocean island. Hoteliers complain that occupancy has dropped below 20 per cent.

Skirmishes in Yala abound to harm the country's image as one of the world's most sought-after

tourism destinations. She has been the prime minister of Sri Lanka three times. First between 1960 and 1965, then between 1970 and 1977, and again since 1995. It was during her late husband S W R D Bandaranaike's tenure in office that the Sinhalese Only Official Language Act of 1956 was promulgated. Sri Lanka has since opted for both English and Tamil to become official national languages along with Sinhalese. It was Bandaranaike's erstwhile opponent, former UNP leader Jayewardene, who bestowed the Tamil language with the status of a national language.

How does she feel serving under her daughter? "I have not been too well. My health was poor. I contested the last elections and it was a very difficult election campaign. I asked for my daughter's support," Bandaranaike explained. "I had a stroke and I couldn't go round the country campaigning as much as I wanted to. I told her to contest the elections in my place." When the chips were down, and she was out of power, it was Bandaranaike's two daughters, Chandrika and Sunethra, who stood by her side. "Are you happy with her performance?" I ventured. "Not always," she chuckled. "The younger generation think that they know it all. But we have more experience than they have. Mother knows best," she said, half in jest.

There is a widespread belief among the Buddhist Sinhalese people that the Buddha selected Sri Lanka as the Dhamma Dipa — the Land of the Purest Buddhist Practice. Long after Buddhism's decline in India, the Buddha prophesied, it shall thrive in its purest form in Sri Lanka. But in the 11th and 12th centuries Tamils from southern India invaded Sri Lanka and established a powerful kingdom in the north of the island.

The island-nation is divided mainly between the majority Sinhalese people who constitute 75 per cent of the population, the ethnic Tamil who comprise 15 per cent of the population and the Muslims — mainly of southern Arabian, Iranian and Indian descent — with roughly 7.5 per cent.

The aboriginal Vedda tribes, who inhabit the dense jungles of the deep interior, and the Burghers, the descendants of Portuguese, Dutch and other European settlers, make up the rest. The Sinhalese, who are divided into lowland, or coastal, Sinhalese and Kandyan, or upland, Sinhalese — overwhelmingly Buddhist — though a minority are Christian. The Burghers are Christian — mainly Roman Catholic. The Tamils are mostly Hindu and the Veddas are animist.

Sirimavo Bandaranaike has always seen herself as the leader of all Sri Lankans. She does not see herself simply as a Sinhalese leader, even though she hails from a distinguished land-owning family of the Kandyan Sinhalese aristocracy. For much of her 36 years in politics, she has been the undisputed leader of the SLFP.

Still, Sri Lankan observers generally give Bandaranaike better marks for her performance abroad than at home. Her name, if not synonymous with, is inextricably intertwined with NAM. She was one of the driving forces behind the movement's success in the heady days of the 1960s. She has remained to this day one of NAM's icons. Her most illustrious moment internationally was when she hosted the NAM summit in the Sri Lankan capital Colombo in 1976.

Bandaranaike has been to Egypt several times, the first was at the Cairo NAM summit in 1963. "I have been to Cairo four times. I have very fond memories of Egypt. President Gamal Abdel-Nasser was a pillar of NAM. I had good Egyptian friends such as the late Ali Sabri," she mused. "We in the Third World suffer from a lack of leadership today." She was especially close to the African leaders of the former British colonies of the Commonwealth countries: Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, the first premier of Nigeria, Kenneth Kaunda, the former president of Zambia, and Julius Nyerere, Tanzania's first president.

Times have changed. "Now, America is the only superpower," she said. "The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank put pressure on Sri Lanka to deregulate its economy. They tried to force us to privatise everything but we refused. Nkrumah, Sukarno, Tito — those were the ones. I am sorry to say we do not have such leadership today. I am disappointed. For small countries like Sri Lanka, NAM was very important: it was the only platform in the international arena for us to have a say in. Only in NAM could we air our views freely," she mused, shrugging her shoulders.

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"Everything is under control. We have managed to contain the war. But we do not have full peace yet... There are still some problems and we are trying to settle these problems through negotiations... It is difficult to talk to the Tigers"

hideaways. Sri Lankan authorities aim at turning the island into a low-budget last-minute tourist destination. The number of holidaymakers from Sri Lanka's main tourist-generating market, Germany, dropped to 20,500 in the first four months of 1996 — a fall of 44 per cent from last year's comparable figure. British tourists visiting Sri Lanka in the same period numbered 9,560 — a decrease of 6.7 per cent from 1995's figure. In fact, Sri Lanka last week announced a financial package to save luxury hotels threatened with closure following a sharp drop in the number of foreign tourists visiting the country. The private sector will spend 125 million rupees (\$2.2 million) to rebuild the island-nation's well deserved image as a holiday destination.

Ethnic violence and civil unrest rocked Sri Lanka in 1956, 1977, 1981 and 1983. The LTTE was formed soon after the tragic events of July-August 1983. Militant Tamil youth went for military training in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley and in India's Tamil Nadu state across the Palk Strait from Sri Lanka. By September 1984, LTTE leader Velupillai Prabhakaran had published the first issue of his bombshell, *War Cry*, a militant Tamil periodical full of graphic descriptions and narratives of Mao Zedong's tactics and triumphs; of Vietnam's Dien Bien Phu and vivid biographical sketches of Ho Chi Minh and the legendary Vietnamese General Giap.

Militant Tamils often blame Bandaranaike's ruling Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) for first creating a climate where Sri Lanka could not function as a pluralist country. The remarkably vigorous oc-

مركز لسان

'Yeltsin doesn't know God'

The Russian capital braced itself for a wave of fresh violence on 13 July after bombs ripped through rush-hour buses two days in a row, killing one person and injuring 30. Some linked the explosions to last week's renewed flare-up of fighting in Chechnya. President Boris Yeltsin called for tough action in Moscow, saying that the city of nine million "was infested with terrorists". Minister of the Interior Anatoly Shchekotov rushed 1,000 additional policemen to the capital, while Moscow's mayor, Yuri Luzhkov, announced a crackdown on "undesirables" such as homeless people and beggars, planning a "powerful cleansing of the city". "We intend to cleanse Moscow of all those elements that we consider dangerous," said Luzhkov. Commenting on the mayor's statement, the Itar-Tass news agency said that the evident targets would be "visitors from the south" — a euphemism for residents from the north Caucasus region and the independent Transcaucasian states, who are routinely scapegoated for acts of "banditry" and "terrorism". Yeltsin's new star appointee, Alexander Lebed, the president's security advisor and secretary of the powerful National Security Council, joined the chorus by promising yet more repression of the "visitors". His plans "include provisions for more police, doubling the pay of judges, more jails, and lavish gifts for informers," reported *The Independent* of London.

Russian President Yeltsin, his mandate renewed, has launched fresh attacks on Chechen civilians. **Faiza Rady** looks at the reasons behind Moscow's disreputable war

self," said Ruslan Khasbulatov, a former president of the Supreme Soviet. The heavy bombing and artillery offensive which started on July, barely one week after Yeltsin's re-election, shattered a fragile ceasefire which began on 10 June. Commenting on the president's reiterated commitment to restore peace in the devastated republic, Alexander Arbuzov, deputy chairman of the parliament's Defence Committee, said that in retrospect his statements "look like an election farce". And a parliamentary coalition in the Duma — the lower house of parliament — presented Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin with a motion to denounce Yeltsin publicly as a "liar" and a "killer," reported the Arabic-language daily *Al-Hayat*. But Chernomyrdin, who naturally wants to keep his job, dismissed the motion. Other ministers used a peculiar logic to whitewash the Russian assault on Chechnya. Disregarding all evidence to the contrary, Nationalities Minister Vyacheslav Mikhailov seemed to use his own version of newspeak when he declared that the Kremlin "remains committed to the peace accords".

In effect, hostilities resumed after General Tikhomirov violated the 29 June peace accords when he decided to bypass political negotiations and resolve the question of prisoners of war through intimidation. On 8 July, he delivered a 24-hour ultimatum to the Chechen command, with the express order to release all prisoners. When the freedom fighters refused to comply, the Russian army started its indiscriminate attack on Chechen villages. Vowing that the fighters "will be eliminated", General Vladimir Shamanov told the Interfax news agency that "ruthless moves" must be made against the Chechen enemy.

Commenting on the new round of carnage in Chechnya, even staunch Yeltsin supporters United States President Bill Clinton — who only last week described his ally's re-election as a "victory for democracy" — suddenly changed his tune. "The State Department deplores attacks on civilians in Chechnya and suggested that Yeltsin's government had decided to re-ignite hostilities," reported the *International Herald Tribune*. "We are dismayed at the recent escalation of fighting," said Nicholas Burns, the State Department spokesman. "It's hard for me to account for a decision by the Russian government to escalate [the conflict] and to go after civilians."

Chechen commanders have accused the Russian army of launching at least 52 attacks on civilian settlements in the last ten days. Tokha Churchkhayev, head of the Urus Martan district administration, told Echo Moscow radio that 66 people were injured and more than 400 homes destroyed in the bombing of Gekhi, a village in the north Caucasus Mountains 30km southwest of the Chechen capital Grozny. As warplanes scorched the village with tons of high explosives on 12 July, residents

blazed with anger while their houses went up in flames. "I have spent 30 years building my house. I have six children to bring up. Where are we going to live now?" asked Zai-nabdin Guchegov, a 54-year-old resident of Gekhi. Like one million of his countrymen, Guchegov was made homeless by Russian bombs. Yet he can consider himself lucky to be alive; more than 400,000 civilians, out of a population of 2.2 million, have been killed since Yeltsin invaded the tiny republic in December 1994. The inordinately high proportion of civilian casualties — almost one fifth of the total population — prompted human rights monitors from the Vienna-based 52-nation Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe to denounce the "attacks against villages [which] have to be qualified as warfare against the civilian population".

If I were Boutros Ghali

By Adel Beshai

A leader in the British *Guardian* newspaper of 21 June caught my attention. Some passages from that article read: "Washington's announcement that it will veto Boutros Boutros-Ghali if he stands for re-election is arrogant and improper. It pre-empted a process of informal discussion and canvassing of names which in the past has taken several months... For the world's only superpower to assert its right to dictate so openly is imprudent too; those matters are usually dealt with more discreetly. It is the biggest gesture of contempt for the secretary-general's position since Nikita Khrushchev demanded in 1961 that the post be replaced by a 'troika'."

Other papers headlined this issue on their front pages. The *International Herald Tribune* of 21 June, for example, wrote a lengthy article entitled: "US is adamant: Boutros Ghali must go". The *Herald Tribune* of 22-23 June 1996 has an article on page two entitled: "Clinton risks angering world over UN chief". That article quotes US Secretary of State Warren Christopher as saying: "We have the veto power, and we're prepared to exercise it." It adds that Russia, China and France, in addition to other countries, are supporting Ghali. The widespread view, says the paper, is that Ghali, a tireless worker who speaks English, French and Arabic, is as good a secretary-general as the UN is likely to get. In addition, "hardly any UN members share Washington's intense preoccupation with revamping the organisation and most delegates appear to believe that the US decision was a flagrant political move."

It is curious that the US official stand this summer does not talk of a single achievement by the secretary-general in the past four and a half years. We see nowhere a detached balance sheet of his performance, especially in the troubled world of the last few years. Oddly enough, a few months ago — in October 1995 — US President Bill Clinton spoke of the visionary gifts Boutros Ghali had to offer, not just for the UN, but for the world as a whole for the next half-century. Rather than writing an analytical essay which may ostensibly be interpreted as being in defence of the secretary-general, I wish to follow a discursive style. If I were Boutros Ghali, I would not make a speech to the UN General Assembly this autumn singing hymns of praise to myself; instead I would pose some questions.

Bureaucracy or even ossified bureaucracy there may well be in the UN. Haven't there been efforts to tackle that in recent years? And what is a reasonable time span that the UN delegates expect this to take in order to make a real dent in a bureaucracy that has been building up for half a century?

As regards overspending, can we not point out palpable achievements in reductions of budgets in the last few years? The UN is for the first time beginning to reverse a hitherto rising expenditure trend.

What do member-states have to say about approval of budgets for the UN and its specialised agencies during the past 50 years: are these decided by the secretariat or by the governing councils? Can the principal member-states be absolved from their past actions, omissions, or mistakes? If reforms were not happening in the past decades in tandem with the continuous functioning of the organisation, can these happen overnight?

Talk of Somalia and Bosnia. The US lists these as dismal UN failures. In the words of the *Guardian* of 21 June: "The alleged 'failure' of the UN in Somalia and Bosnia has more to do with the actions and omissions of the principal member-states than with the secretary-general. In Somalia it was the US which insisted, for a time, on running the show disastrously under a UN flag. In Bosnia, the UN peacekeepers were starved of funds and manpower to carry out an unrealistic mandate imposed on them by the Security Council." Shouldn't such issues be addressed fairly and squarely in assessing the role of the secretary-general?

If the whole world now talks of that mystic word "globalisation", what does that word really mean in the context of the member-states? Does it mean that only one country knows what the tasks best suited to the UN are? Are these tasks dictated or pronounced? The old dictum in politics says: "A leader must 'satisfy' not 'maximise'". How do you apply it in the melody of nearly 200 nations?

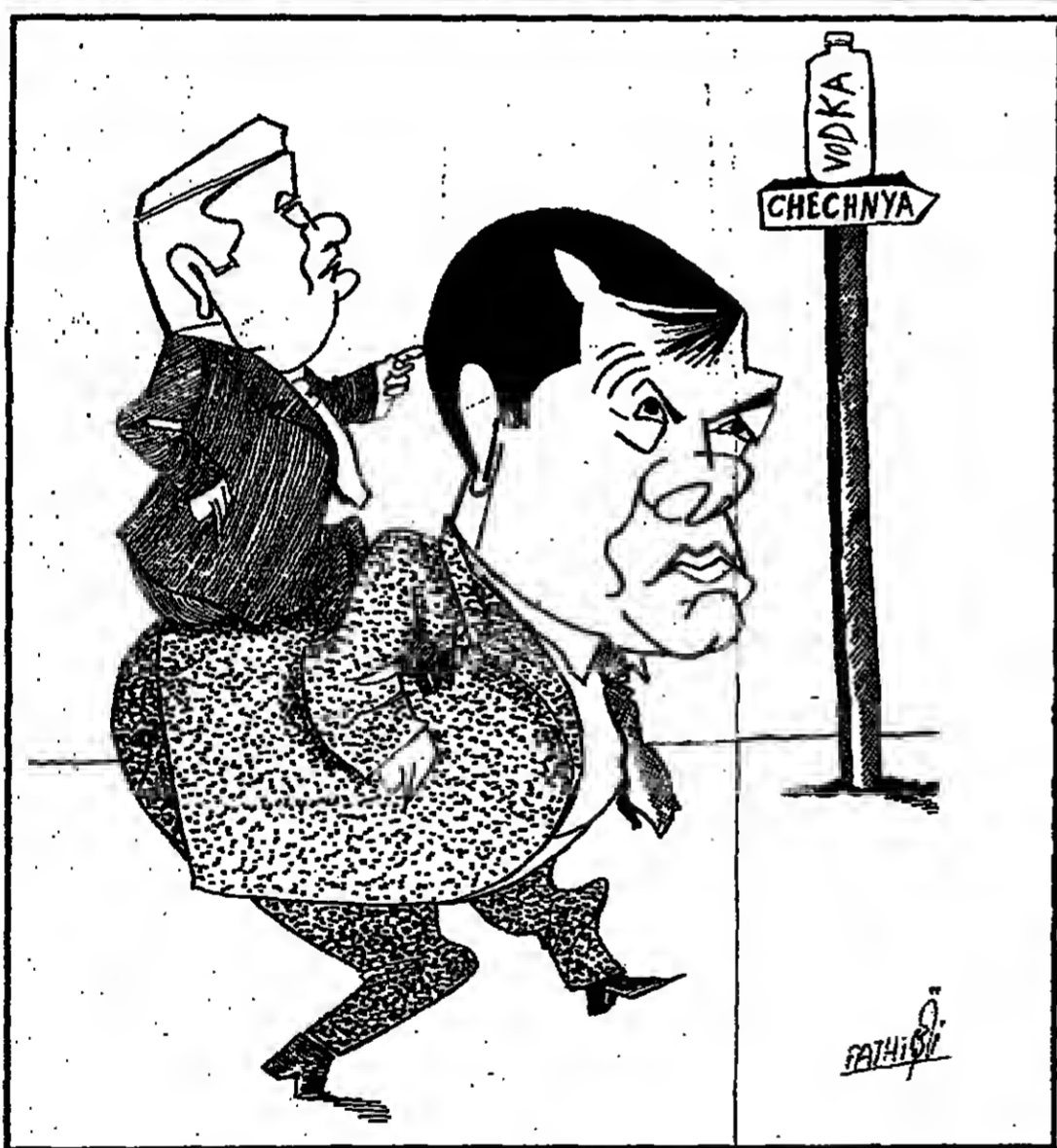
What is the world order of the day now? Is it actually a world order? Or are we in a world disorder. With the passing away of the Soviet Union as the second superpower and the end of the Cold War, we are now perhaps in a cold peace. If it was a game with two contestants, does this mean that there is now a sole player representing a world order, or is the present world disorder a transitional phase after which we may get a game with three players — US, Europe and Asia? Or perhaps there will be more players in the game.

Is there any institution which can constantly engage in dynamic reform continuously, be it a business enterprise, a corporation, or an international financial institution? Aren't the funding institutions revising their approaches from project to programme approaches, considering that the former may have resulted in static gains only, often to the sacrifice of the ecosystem in the longer term?

Yes, the UN needs reform. One cannot but agree with the US and others that it emphatically needs reform. But reform is not an act. It is a process. How many would agree with the proposition that the Security Council, which still has the right to reject a candidate, must insist on being intensely consulted on who the secretary-general should be? Shouldn't the General Assembly make the ultimate choice?

It is the answers to these questions by the UN delegates themselves in the General Assembly that will in the final analysis vindicate the case of Boutros Ghali as the rigorous, purposeful and visionary secretary-general.

The writer is professor of international economics at the American University in Cairo.



Sectarian strife rips through Ulster

Was the bomb which exploded in Enniskillen, Northern Ireland, this week a riposte to militant Protestant obstinacy in Portadown asks Doaa El-Bey in London

Ever since the Irish Republican Army (IRA) announced its ceasefire in 1994, the British and Irish governments, among other parties, have been keen to reconcile the different political parties in Northern Ireland. But the recent unrest in the province, which culminated in this week's bombing in Enniskillen, has shown that what Ulster really needs is to have its Catholic and Protestant communities find some common ground and develop the will to coexist.

The Enniskillen explosion was the first bombing to occur in Northern Ireland since the IRA ceasefire began. Although the IRA has not claimed responsibility, many accusing fingers are being pointed in its direction. What people fear now is that the loyalist paramilitaries will break their 22-month-old ceasefire, returning Ulster to the sort of sectarian violence which killed 3,000 people in the 25 years between 1969 and 1994.

Sunday's explosion ripped through the newly renovated Killybegs Hotel in Enniskillen, a town in the south-west of the province near the border with the Irish Republic, leaving the building in ruins. A coded warning which came less than 30 minutes before the bomb went off allowed hotel staff to evacuate the 300 odd guests, most of whom were attending a wedding reception at the time. The last guests escaped from the building just two minutes before the blast, but no one sustained serious injuries. The bomb had been planted in a jeep parked outside the hotel.

Enniskillen was where the IRA committed one of its most politically disastrous acts, when it planted a bomb that exploded without warning in November 1987. Eleven Protestants were killed as they paid their respects to the dead of two world wars at an outdoor ceremony.

Sunday's incident was preceded by a week of appalling violence in the province. Rioting began on 7 July when Police Chief Constable Sir Hugh Annesley decided to stop members of the Orange Order, Northern Ireland's dominant Protestant fraternal group, from marching through a Catholic part of Portadown 40km southwest of Belfast.

The Orangemen wanted to use Garvaghy Road to commemorate the victory of William of Orange, a Dutch Protestant crowned British king, over the Catholic forces of deposed monarch James II at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690. The road is, however, mostly inhabited by Catholics, who object strongly to the anti-Catholic chants that often accompany the Protestant marches and who have repeatedly asked for the Orange Order to change their route.

The Orangemen refused to reroute their march, using the argument that they had marched through Garvaghy Road for the last 188 years. In addition, many unionists regarded Annesley's decision as yet another "concession" by the British government to the nationalists — those favouring union with the Irish Republic.

Despite pleas that they should make compromises for the sake of peace, the Orangemen stood their ground and militant Protestants rioted for four days, hijacking vehicles, blocking roads, intimidating Catholics from their homes and threatening to overrun police lines north of Portadown. The stand-off with the police angered unionists outside Portadown; some 16 families were said to have fled their homes in north Belfast as unionist violence escalated there.

Last Thursday, the police gave in and Annesley reversed his decision, allowing the 70,000 Orangemen to march. The security forces had to pull angry Catholic residents out of the way of the march by force as they chanted "No consent, no march" and armoured vehicles were placed on

each side of the road to protect the Protestants.

Nationalists were never as united about condemning an act as they were about condemning Annesley's second decision. Both the Catholic Church and Irish Prime Minister John Bruton denounced it as succumbing to the rule of the mob. Ulster's largest nationalist party, the Social Democratic and Labour Party, reacted by withdrawing from the Northern Ireland forum elected in May. Mitchell McLaughlin of Sinn Féin, the IRA's political wing, described the events in Portadown as a political coup d'état by the unionists using the muscle of the Orangemen.

Catholic fury swept through the province for several days following Annesley's climbdown. Police and soldiers repelled Catholics who fired petrol bombs, bricks and rocks at them in parts of Belfast and Londonderry, the predominantly Catholic town where Northern Ireland's "troubles" began with similar scenes in 1969. Several hundred rioters confronted police in Londonderry until dawn on Sunday, throwing an estimated 1,000 petrol bombs that destroyed a post office, a pub and several cars.

Hopes for some form of reconciliation after such full-scale sectarian violence now rest on meetings, which started on Tuesday, between Britain's Sir Patrick Mayhew, secretary of state for Northern Ireland, and Irish Foreign Minister Dick Spring in Belfast.

Edited by Gamal Nikumrah

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Pressing economic matters

Journalism faces other problems than those raised by restrictive Law No. 93, which was annulled recently by President Mubarak. **Ibrahim Ahmed Ibrahim** looks at the economics of the press in Egypt

As an industry, the press provides both a specialised product and a service, albeit one which is governed primarily by political considerations given the circumstances under which it was launched in Egypt. One of the first newspapers to be started in Egypt was *Al-Baqa' Al-Misriya* (Egyptian Events), which was established by Mohamed Ali. From the start, this paper relied on state funding and support for virtually all of its day-to-day production, distribution and editorial needs.

Over the last 150 years, the nature of the press industry has changed little with regard to its relationship with the state, and it continues to rely on the government, either directly or indirectly for its editorial policy, printing, distribution and production.

Currently, Egypt's varied press institutions, governed by the press laws of 1960 and 1980, are "nominally" owned by the Share Council and its editorial freedom is overseen by the Supreme Council of the Press. These laws, while fairly comprehensive, serve only to provide a framework for operations. The day-to-day management is left to the administrative and editorial staff who are concerned with realising the maximum profit and best quality product within the constraints of the law and the market to which they cater.

These two factors, however, are not mutually exclusive, and in many ways serve to not only shape the content of the paper, but help dictate trends within the industry as a whole. To a great extent, this is a result of the fact that the industry is a high maintenance, high turn-over industry. The budget of an established Egyptian newspaper can reach up to LE500 million, and requires the services, both in the editorial, reporting and administrative fields, of several hundreds. The profits realised through daily distribution and sales, however, account for only about 15 per cent of a paper's total revenues. Therefore, it is immediately apparent that launching a newspaper in Egypt is a losing venture, made more dire by the fact that private ownership of a newspaper is forbidden by the press laws in the country. Should this legislative hurdle be overcome, for example by securing a party licence to found a newspaper, the problem of revenues versus costs still remains. In order to establish a newspaper, 500 individuals must invest LE250,000 each and another 200 individuals must put up LE100,000 apiece. The interest on these sums, alone, is an impediment to founding new newspapers.

Therefore, with financing and revenues a major obstacle for established and would-be established newspapers, publications with both large and small circulations, are forced to rely on advertising as a major source of revenue, often accounting for 42 per cent of their total revenue. Larger publishing houses such as Al-Ahram Organisation, with ample production capabilities, distribution networks and budgets, are afforded the opportunity to branch into other publishing avenues such as books and magazines. By diversifying their product line, these organisations are able to minimise the risk of relying primarily on the profits realised (or not) from the production and sale of daily newspapers.

Resulting in part from these factors, there is a tendency towards monopolisation evident in the Egyptian press industry. In Egypt today, there are less than 10 daily newspapers, forming what is referred to as an "oligopoly". In addition to the previously listed factors, there are two other main reasons for this trend. The first is that the revolutionary government of 1952 closed down more than 100 newspapers and periodicals. The second main reason is one relating to economies of scale. Larger newspapers are able to publish and produce their product at a cost lower than that shouldered by small newspapers. When compounded by the fact that start-up costs are extremely high, that the readership base for newspapers in Egypt has a ceiling of about 3 million, press organisations are forced either to increase their circulation by improving editorial content, or to diversify their product. Neither of these two options is particularly simple to implement except for leading press institutions like Al-Ahram or Al-Akhbar.

The prevalence of an oligopoly in the industry is also an impediment to smaller newspapers. Since they are able to produce at a lower cost, distribute more widely and secure greater capital, these organisations are able to indirectly advertise the price of the product and secure more advertising. They are also able to exert more sway in the political and social arenas.

These industry monopolies, however, can be broken down into either a comprehensive monopoly, a vertical monopoly or a horizontal monopoly. This means that different organisations are able to dominate in one or more different areas of the market, and consequently have more room for growth.

With the press industry being characterised by the duality in the nature of its product, these monopolistic trends take on an exceedingly important light. The duality lies in the balance between editorial content and advertising. By improving the content of the newspaper, the editorial staff is able to help secure more ads, which, in turn, means more revenues through increased distribution and greater circulation. And since daily newspapers are "perishable" — in other words, each issue is in demand for only 24 hours — this limited period of time means that deadlines for submission of articles, layout and printing are of the essence. With competition reaching the cut-throat level, a delay in hitting the stands can result in losing a portion of the readership. Consequently, larger press houses like Al-Ahram and Al-Akhbar have an advantage over small firms in that they have the technical resources and manpower to meet these deadlines and therefore the chance to increase their circulation.

But even with a wide distribution base and quality reporting, the revenues secured through sales and distribution, as mentioned earlier, account for only 15 per cent of the paper's total revenue. Larger institutions that fall under the oligopoly category are able to bridge this revenue gap through advertising and diversification in their product line. The reason for this is quite simple. Those papers with a greater readership will be more able to solicit advertising than papers with circulations of, for example, 20,000. Moreover, with their fingers in the production, printing, distribution and marketing pies, these larger institutions will already have in place the technology needed to churn out other publications. And, with a large staff, they will be able to reallocate tasks more readily, often allowing for additional services such as translation and investment opportunities to be made available to the public.

Other factors aside from monopolistic practices play an integral role in the development and success of the press industry in Egypt. The country's high level of illiteracy has meant that the market for newspapers is limited to about 3 million copies sold per day. Although the population growth rate is sure to add to this figure, the increase may not be enough to allow newspapers to rely less on advertising and other outside sources of revenue. Clearly, new solutions are called for, one of which may be found in Egypt's drive to privatise public sector industries. A model which has been proposed for the state-owned newspapers is one where one-third of the paper is owned by the government, another third by the employees and the final third by private shareholders. Such a plan provides for a balance between experience, ownership, management and finance, without forsaking the local character of these publications. However, plans like this one are linked to the introduction of a new press law, an issue which is still to be discussed and studied.

The writer is an expert in the economics of journalism.

Edited by Ghada Ragab

Parliament holidays on a productive note

The People's Assembly concluded its annual parliamentary session last Sunday, passing nine new laws aimed at boosting investment and productivity. **Gamal Essam El-Din** reports

In an effort to relieve citizens and foreigners of a number of burdensome taxes, and to facilitate frustrating documentation procedures, the People's Assembly unanimously approved nine laws this week.

Addressing MPs early this week, Prime Minister Kamal El-Ganzouri indicated that the nine laws passed by the Assembly are part of his cabinet's programme to raise production and investment rates. These laws, he said, fall in line with the state's strategy of strengthening the infrastructure by building roads and implementing water and electricity projects, thereby encouraging some residents of the Nile Valley to move to new, outlying communities. "These laws are quite necessary, especially since over 62 million people live in this valley today compared to the nine million at the start of this century," said El-Ganzouri.

The first of the laws approved by the Assembly is one cancelling a tax currently imposed on inheritance. According to Tawfik Abdou Ismail, chairman of the Assembly's Planning and Budget Committee, this tax was first levied in 1944 and then gradually raised in 1952 and 1989. These increases, however, were not gradual enough for the public. To avoid paying this burdensome tax, he said, individuals did not register the assets they inherited in the public notary's office. "As a result, the total annual revenue of this tax was always quite modest," said Ismail, noting that the revenue generated last year from the tax only amounted to LE21 million while the costs of collecting this tax reached as much as LE15 million. Therefore, argued Ismail, not only will this new law encourage those who inherit money and property to invest their funds in establishing new development projects, but would also give foreigners the confidence to increase their investments in Egypt.

Second on the list of laws approved this week by the Assembly was a controversial amendment to Law No. 84 of

1986 that allows both Egyptians and foreigners to build, administer and maintain highways for as long as 99 years. While this amendment was highly praised by a large number of MPs, it was severely criticised by others with leftist inclinations.

According to Badri Farghali, an MP for the leftist-oriented Tagammu Party, this law gives foreigners complete control over strategic highways in Egypt, and comes at the expense of national security. According to Farghali, the amended law grants foreigners a number of concessions, including the right to build hotels, rest houses, agricultural projects and auto repair shops on either side of the highway.

Ayman Nour, a Wafdist MP, objected to the law on the grounds that it will open a door for foreigners to build roads even in such strategic areas as Sinai.

Sameh Ashour, a Nasserist MP, objected to the fact that the law grants foreigners a 99-year concession to use the road. "This reminds us of the dear price Egypt paid when former President Gamal Abdel-Nasser decided to nationalise the Suez Canal to put an end to a 100-year foreign concession of the canal," said Ashour. Ragab Hemeida, a Liberal Party MP, Ahmed Taha and Mohamed Marzouq, both independents, warned that this law will give the Israelis a golden opportunity to exert an influence on a strategic sector in Egypt.

The third law modifies two paragraphs of Article No. 22 of income

tax Law No. 157 of 1981. The modification cuts by half a 5 per cent tax on real estate sales revenues. It also cancels the fifth paragraph of Article No. 22, thereby forbidding the public notary offices from collecting this tax in behalf of the tax authority. According to Ismail, in the past, this tax discouraged buyers from registering their property in public notary offices and led to complicated disputes over

property rights. Taha, commenting on this law, called for applying this reduction to low and medium-cost properties and excluding owners of luxury properties from this reduction.

The fourth law cancelled article no. 3 of the foreign exchange Law No. 38 of 1994, removing all obstacles preventing foreigners from taking abroad the money they received from the sale of any property within Egypt. Pre-

viously, foreigners were required to deposit the value of the sold real estate in a bank account, in Egyptian pounds.

According to Mustafa El-Said, chairman of the Assembly's Economic Affairs Committee, this modification is in line with liberalisation policies and complements another new law that gives foreigners the right to own buildings and lands.

The fifth law approved by the as-

sembly modifies Law No. 114 of 1946, and exempts citizens from paying any fees for the forms needed to document real estate in public notary offices.

Within the same context, the sixth law modifies Law No. 70 of 1964, reducing by half the fees charged for documenting a property in a public notary office. The seventh law modifies a number of laws and cancels a 2 per cent annual tax on vacant land sur-

rounding cities.

But it was the eighth law that drew the most criticism. It allows foreigners, for the first time, to own real estate provided that the area of the property does not exceed 4,000 square metres. The law also extends the duration of building licences from three to five years. Sameh Ashour, a Nasserist MP, said the new law will fuel speculation on real estate and will cause their prices to soar. Ragab Hemeida and Mohamed Marzouq also argued that the new law will open the door wide to Israelis and "Zionists" to own large areas of land in Egypt. Responding to these statements, Finance Minister Mohamed El-Gharib emphasised that the new law will create a thriving real estate market in Egypt and will help solve the country's housing crisis.

The Assembly also passed a modification of 1984's Law No. 147, which regulates the labour-related issues of Egyptians working for foreign employers at home and abroad. The newly-modified law now requires that university graduates pay an annual fee of LE100 for each work permit while non-university graduates have to pay LE50. In the past, both university graduates and others had to pay LE114 and LE89 per work permit, respectively, for the first year and then LE168 and LE143, respectively for subsequent annual renewals. The aim of this amendment, said the Budget Committee's Chairman Tawfik Abdou Ismail, is to encourage Egyptians to look for job opportunities with foreign employers anywhere.

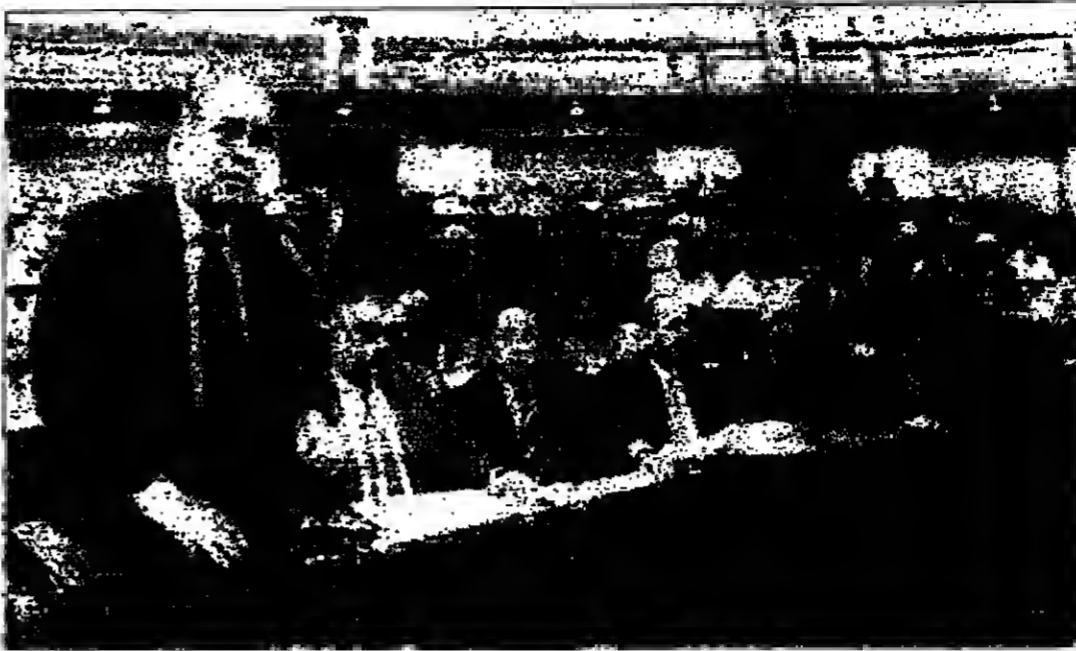


photo: Mohamed Lutfi

Market on the upswing

Share values may be on the decline in the Egyptian stock market but, writes **Mona Qassem**, foreign investment is not

While trading on the Egyptian stock exchange has recently experienced a surge in activity, the value of the shares traded has been on the decline. Several factors are responsible for this, foremost among them a drop in the dividends on some shares. Investors, noting that they were receiving a diminishing return on their investment, decided to sell off their shares to avoid absorbing further losses in the future. Consequently, this has led to a greater decline in the value of shares.

Other investors, however, are holding onto their cash in anticipation of new shares to be floated following a government announcement that it will put up another 54 companies for sale. In addition, say experts, a drop in the share value is common at this time of year when companies are preparing to announce their end-of-year statements and balance sheets.

Foreign investors, on the other hand, focusing on the long term, have seized the opportunity to purchase these shares at a low price. Investment in the stock exchange by foreigners accounted for 36 per cent of the total transactions on the market during the first quarter of 1996.

Foreign interest in the market peaked in May following the sale of shares in the Medinat Nasr Housing and Development Company and the Financial and Industrial Company (FIC). The FIC offering drew the attention of 43 foreign investment funds which subsequently submitted

purchase orders for 1.1 million shares, although only 10 per cent of the company's three million shares were originally floated. To cover this unexpectedly high demand, the company raised the volume of its offering to 75 per cent of its total shares.

The growing foreign interest in the Egyptian capital market is mainly a result of a shift in Egypt's privatisation policy. While the government, in the past, floated only 10-20 per cent of its holdings in public sector companies, it is now putting up for sale majority stakes to anchor investors and the public. The government is also increasing the pace of the privatisation process. Moreover, investors have been encouraged by the increasing transparency of the status of the companies being privatised.

In other steps to boost the privatisation programme, the government recently issued a number of decrees aimed at stimulating the capital market. These include the abolishment of the 40 per cent income tax on the profits realised by investment funds, as well as exempting capital gains, accrued from the sale of securities, from a two per cent tax.

Not only have these reforms boosted foreign interest in the Egyptian capital market, but will also be instrumental in securing other investors once the Egyptian stock exchange is listed in the International Finance Corporation's index for emerging markets later this year.

Market report

Citibank leads the way

THE GENERAL Market Index gained 1.9 points to close at 205.7 for the week ending 11 July after the value of trading reached LE89 million.

The manufacturing sector's index gained 1.77 points. The Lebon Ceramics Company's (Lebonco) shares ended the week as the market's biggest winner, witnessed a 50.39 per cent increase in value to level off at LE609, while those of the Family Foods Company gained LE5 to level off at LE229 per share. Shares of the Paints and Chemical Industries Company ended up by LE5 to end at LE630.

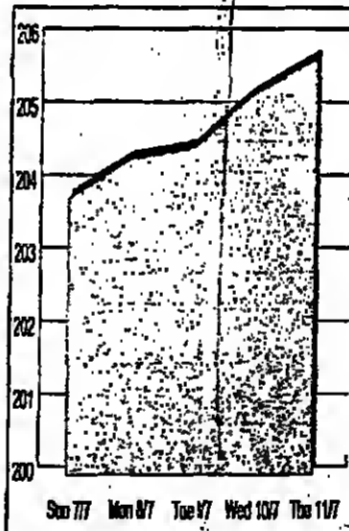
On the flip side, however, shares of the El-Nasr Cloth and Textiles Company (Kabo) declined by LE18.7 to level off at LE120, while those of the Alexandria Portland Cement Company fell by LE8 to stabilise at LE378. Registering the greatest decrease in value, the General Paper Manufacturing Company (Rakta) suffered a 13.78

per cent drop in its share value, leaving its stock at LE19.25.

The index for the financial sector managed to gain 2.45 points to close at 204.93 by the end of the week. El-Ahli-Société General's shares gained LE20.9 to level off at LE280, while those of the Medinat Nasr Housing and Development Company and the Helopolis Housing and Development Company again stood out as two of the market's strongest contenders.

While the former gained LE5.25 to close at LE97.25, the latter's share value gained LE10 to stabilise at LE240. However, shares of the Misr International Bank (MIBank) suffered a LE9.5 drop in value to level off at LE269.5. Citibank bonds cornered the highest share of market transactions, 31.21 per cent, trading LE27.77 million in bonds.

In all, the share values of 27 companies increased, 24 decreased and 31 remained stable.



Belarus on the Nile

Promoting bilateral economic ties was the impetus behind a visit to Egypt by a delegation of Belarus businessmen. **Mona El Fiqi** reports

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, formerly a major market for Egyptian exports, the Egyptian Federation of Chambers of Commerce (EFCC) took the initiative to invite business delegations from the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) for discussions aimed at promoting bilateral economic relations.

In a continuation of this policy, a delegation of 38 businessmen from Belarus arrived in Egypt last week for a seven-day visit which included meetings with representatives of the Egyptian Federation of Industries (EFI), the EFCC and a tour of the new industrial cities.

Abdel-Satar Eshra, the EFCC's secretary-general, said that "the aim of the visit is to provide Egyptian businessmen with the latest information on the economic and social conditions in the former Soviet republics." He added that "Egypt had strong economic ties to the Soviet Union and following its collapse, Egypt lost nearly 70 per cent of its market there."

"Therefore," Eshra said, "we are trying to increase the scope of cooperation between Egypt and the new republics."

The past few years was that Egyptian businessmen encountered numerous problems when dealing with the banking sector in these former Soviet republics. Most of these countries lack foreign or joint venture banks which are instrumental in facilitating the securing of funds for foreign businessmen.

Moreover, added Eshra, "another reason is that trade was generally conducted by representatives of the Egyptian and Russian governments. But now, Egyptian businessmen have to deal with the private sectors of these countries which are confronted by a bevy of financial problems." To help iron out these wrinkles, a joint CIS-Arab Chamber of Commerce will be established in Moscow for the benefit of Arab investors.

In talks with the EFCC and the EFI, members of the Belarus delegation stressed that after undergoing several economic and industrial reforms, the former Soviet republic is now considered the industrial centre of the CIS. Members of the delegation also announced that the first Belarus embassy in the Middle East will be opened in Egypt by the end of 1997.

The main reason behind the decline in the volume of trade over

Lisez

En vente tous les mercredis

□ 1952-1996

Que sont devenus les Egyptiens ?

□ Netanyahu

Visite explosive

□ Entretien avec Ossama Al-Baz

En attendant l'Europe

□ Hommes d'affaires

La nouvelle élite égyptienne

Autobus du Caire

La vie est un embouteillage

□ Supplément

Cent ans de JO

Rédacteur en Chef

Exécutif

Mohamed Salmawy

Président

et Rédacteur en Chef

Ibrahim Nafie

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Al-Ahram: A Diwan of contemporary life

Napoleon's expedition in Egypt sparked universal interest in Pharaonic antiquities. When Mohamed Ali took control of the country he issued orders prohibiting the export of these forgotten monuments from Egypt and allocated a special wing of the exchequer in Ezbekeya to house them. Under Abbas I (1848-1854) the antiquities were relocated to the Citadel. It is difficult to imagine a more dramatic moment in history than that morning of 1854 when, while conducting Austrian Archduke Maximilian on a tour of these magnificent treasures, Abbas presented the entire collection to the awestruck prince. The archduke must have still been thunderstruck by his good fortune as he transported these magnificent gifts back to Austria.

Four years later, under Abbas's successor, Said Pasha, the French archaeologist, Mariette Pasha was appointed by supreme decree as "the commissioner of antiquities works in Egypt". Since his arrival in Egypt in 1850, Mariette had worked untiringly in unearthing ancient Egyptian treasures and established a modest storehouse in Boulak to house them. This storehouse constituted the core of what was to become the Egyptian Museum.

The major impetus for establishing this institution on Egyptian soil, as was the case with other cultural institutions, took place under Khedive Ismail. No sooner had he come to power in 1863 than Ismail ordered that the antiquities storehouse in Boulak be repaired and expanded. It was inaugurated in an official celebration on 18 October of that year.

Ismail spent several years in Paris as one of the members of the royal family study mission that was sent to France in 1844. During his stay there he must have seen the institute described by the famous chronicler Rifa'a El-Tahtawi: "Among the institutions there is one for the preservation of antiquities. The institute is equipped to preserve all historical marvels belonging to the ancients such as their buildings, their mummies and their clothing. It is also dedicated to the study of their customs. One finds there many precious objects that have been taken from Egypt." Ismail, like El-Tahtawi, was certain to have been inspired by this building and its collection.

The newly inaugurated "house of monuments and antiquities" remained under French administration for several decades. Maspero took over in 1881 after his former Mariette died. Even after the British occupied Egypt, this was one institute that they dared not touch. Not only were they reluctant to antagonise the French, but they recognised France's superiority in this domain. The British may have confiscated the Rosetta Stone when the French expedition left Egypt, but it was a Frenchman — the famous Jean-François Champollion — who deciphered it.

Otherwise, the new institute was very ex-

clusive. One reads in *Al-Ahram* of an occasional visit by the khedive or the addition of a new monument. But there is no indication that the museum was open to the public, whether Egyptians or foreigners.

When the museum was moved to Giza at the beginning of the last decade of the 19th century, it opened a new and relatively unknown chapter in the history of this famous display and its splendid contents. Most sources trace the move to 1891. Thanks to *Al-Ahram* of 31 January 1890 we can correct this erroneous dating to nearly a year earlier. That day's edition reports, "We went to the Egyptian Museum in its new home in Giza. We visited all the rooms and have only one comment to make. Such is the modern artistry of display that one is left with an impression of the utmost perfection. The articles are so well exhibited that one imagines that one is in the grandest museum in Europe. Every room has a special guard."

We also learn from this correspondent that the museum in its new location was now open to the public. "There are more than 50 visitors a day, most of whom are foreigners," he writes. "The entrance fee is five piastres." On Tuesdays entrance was free of charge. "There are no less than 300 visitors on this day, two-thirds of whom are Egyptians and one third foreigners. Most of the Egyptian visitors are from Giza. Visitors from Cairo are rare."

The policy of allowing the public to enter free of charge one day per week was obviously intended to encourage Egyptians to visit the museum. Several years down the line, however, the policy began to get out of hand. We learn from *Al-Ahram* of 2 December 1893 that large numbers of foreigners were taking advantage of this offer. More than 1,500 tourists visited the museum that day, as though five piastres was too expensive for them. Officials were forced to reassess the wisdom of their pricing policy.

Indeed, the issue continued to preoccupy the museum administration for some time. In April, the antiquities committee asked the government to issue a decree that would permit them to lower the entrance fee to two piastres, "so that we may facilitate entrance to the public and impart broader benefit." In April 1896, yielding to the pressures of the press and public opinion, it was decided to permit entrance free of charge for a trial period of six months.

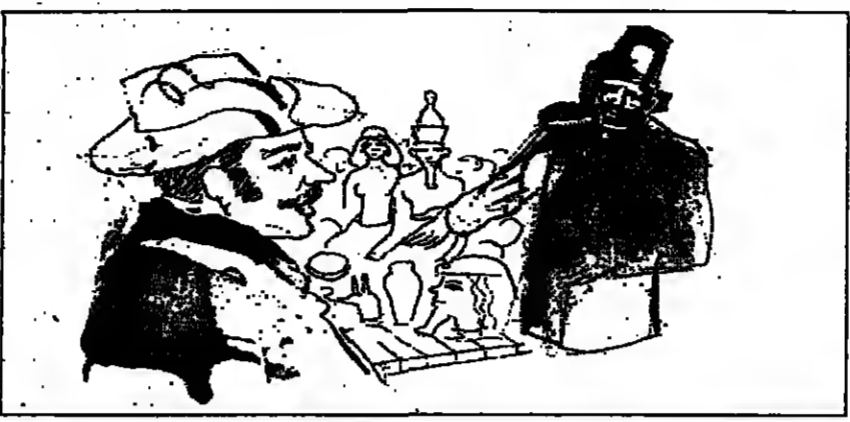
Evidently, the experiment was a failure, for on 16 October 1896 one opens *Al-Ahram* to read the following announcement placed by the Antiquities Authority: "The doors to the museum will be open to the public every day but Monday from 9:00 am to 4:30 pm. The entrance fee is five piastres per person."

Pricing was not the only concern of museum officials. "The question of insuring the precious wealth it contains, preserving it from deterioration and safeguarding them from theft and fire" was another.

The preservation of the mummies was of particular importance. A French antiquities expert wrote to the minister of public

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Since his arrival in Egypt in 1850, the French archaeologist Mariette Pasha worked assiduously in unearthing ancient Egyptian treasures and established a modest storehouse in Boulak to house them. This storehouse constituted the nucleus of what was to become the Egyptian Museum, a showcase that no foreign tourist visiting Egypt can afford to miss. In this instalment of his chronicle of modern Egyptian history as seen through the pages of *Al-Ahram*, Dr Yunan Labib Rizq recounts the evolution of the 'house of monuments and antiquities'



works, which supervised the museum, to express his concern that "the mummified bodies in the museum, exposed in their current manner, are at risk of deterioration because the humidity in the air ruins the substances used for mummification." He suggests, therefore, that "these priceless rare articles be wrapped in silk, enclosed in tightly sealed zinc cases and buried in a well-known cemetery."

To safeguard the museum from theft, officials implemented a number of measures. They increased the number of guards, cordoned off the museum from other buildings in the Giza complex and "cut down the trees next to the building so as to provide better visibility of the grounds and to prevent thieves from climbing from the trees onto the building."

It was also important to curb antiquities thefts in general. An *Al-Ahram* item reports: "The director of the Egyptian antiquities museum has asked that 12 gold items found by the police be delivered into the care of the museum." In another item we read, "The police have seized five sarcophagi containing five mummies in El-Amyan Alley and turned them over to the Egyptian Museum."

Evidently, by 1898 the trade in stolen antiquities developed into a very serious issue. In this year, the government passed the first ordinance prohibiting the public from "digging on government lands with the aim of excavating antiquities. Violators will be imprisoned for seven days."

As for fire prevention, in December 1892 the Council of Ministers formed a high-level committee "to determine the precautions necessary to safeguard the premises of the museum in Giza from fire." After more than a year, the committee decided to allocate LE60,000 for this purpose. This enormous sum for that period is indicative of status the museum had achieved.

Alongside such investments, further provisions had to be made to ensure the museum's future: among them developing a corps of antiquities specialists. Toward this end, "the director of the royal antiquities museum founded a school to provide young Egyptians with instruction, free of charge, in the science of antiquities, so as to prepare these young men to dedicate their services to the country in their employment in the activities associated with this field."

The museum continued under French management throughout the 1880s. Maspero was succeeded by Gharibi who in turn was succeeded by de Morgan. Indeed, the fact that Maspero had been buried in the Boulak museum's garden and that his grave had then been relocated to the gardens of the museum in Giza constituted a signal that the French had no intention of relinquishing their supremacy in Egyptology. Yet, in the following decade, British encroachment on this domain began to loom inexorably closer, particularly after the British succeeded in taking over the management of the Khedivial Law School, which in language and curriculum had

been under French control for decades.

The battle between the French and British over the antiquities department began in 1890. The opening shows were fired by the correspondent of *The Times* in November. The French have been in control over antiquities for too long, he insisted. This was why, as we read in *Al-Ahram*, "Sir Evelyn Baring [later Lord Cromer] and the Egyptian ministers have developed new administrative arrangements to separate the authority for the preservation of antiquities from the authority of antiquities exploration and excavation." The intention was apparently to put this latter authority under British control.

Al-Ahram was appalled by the new division, which it claimed, would render the department "paralysed and ineffective". Moreover, the newspaper argued, during the deliberations that gave rise to dual French and British control over the Caisse de la Dette Publique (Public Debt Fund), the British had pledged to keep the antiquities department under French administration. The newspaper's arguments fell on deaf ears.

Ultimately, however, for many, particularly *Al-Ahram*, the location of the museum in Giza would come to be the major bone of contention. Within only a few months of its opening in its Giza location, *Al-Ahram* wrote, "It would have been better to designate a more central location in the capital, as is the case with museums in most of the world's major cities."

Mouthing pressures for a more central location for the museum prompted the government to form a committee composed of the deputy ministers of foreign affairs, education and public works and the museum's director, de Morgan, to "investigate the question of building new premises for the Egyptian Antiquities Museum in the city centre so as to facilitate the public's access."

The pros and cons of the proposed move became subject to public debate. Opponents argued that the estimated LE15,000 it would cost was too extravagant and that the relocation would take over four years.

The view of supporters of the proposed relocation was championed by *Al-Ahram*. Moving the museum to the city centre, *Al-Ahram* wrote, would kill two birds with one stone: "It will bring seekers of knowledge closer to the sources and, secondly, it will establish premises for a public library that will attract polite and refined young people and divert them from wasting their time in coffee houses, thus establishing models of comportment for other young people whose misfortune has driven them to wasting their time and money in gambling emporiums and houses of ill-repute."

In December 1892, the committee announced that it had designated a site for the new premises of the museum. It would be located between Qasr El-Nil barracks and the Ismailiya Canal and construction would cost around LE100,000. However, final approval would not be so readily forthcoming. The Caisse de la Dette Publique

constituted a major obstacle, prompting *Al-Ahram's* Editor-in-Chief Bishara Tagla to write on 10 March 1894, "The ministers must stand up against the foreigners' greed and despotism."

Six days later, however, archaeological discoveries in Dahshur would help sway the Caisse. As is customary in these cases, the Ministry of Public Works formed a committee which announced a competition for the best design for the new museum. On 16 March 1895, the blueprints were put on exhibit, with attention given to concealing the identities and countries of origin of their architects, "so as to ensure the utmost integrity in the selection."

Unfortunately, the Egyptian expedition to Dongola in Sudan upset plans to go forward with the project. Moreover, advocates of the new museum were incensed that the money that had been allocated to it by the Caisse would be diverted to support the campaign in Sudan. By the end of 1896, this final hurdle was crossed and the project was given to an Italian architect, Marcello Dominici, and the Caisse also agreed to allocate the funds "to cover the difference between the tender and the originally stipulated credit for the museum."

The first of April was set as the date for celebrating the laying of the cornerstone. The Ministry of Public Works had designed a special plaque to be set beside the cornerstone. Inscribed in French, it said, "During the tenure of Khedive Abbas Helmi II, Prime Minister Mustafa Fahmy Pasha, Minister of Public Works Fakhr Pasha and the architect Monsieur Marcello Dominici, construction was begun on this building for Egyptian antiquities, this being the year 1898."

Present at the ceremonies were the khedive, the supreme judge of Egypt, the Ottoman commissioner Mukhtar Pasha Al-Ghazi, cabinet ministers, the international consuls-general, senior government officials, and, last but not least, representatives of the press. *Al-Ahram*, of course, was on hand, and wrote that, after the khedive and the minister of public works made their speeches, "His Royal Highness took a rosewood pen, dipped it in an inkwell made of rosewood with silver corners, and signed the inauguration book." With great decorum, the book, alongside the commemorative plaque were then placed beneath the cornerstone.

Egyptians who had imagined that, now that the museum had such great local and international backing, it would be completed within a few months were in for a disappointment. Construction took five years and seven months. The museum opened its doors to the public on 15 November 1902. The events that took place in the interval in themselves constitute a separate chapter of the *Diwan*.

The author is a professor of history and head of Al-Ahram History Studies Centre.



Hassan Fathi Village opened

A LARGE reception will be held for Egyptian journalists on the occasion of the completion of the Hassan Fathi Village, named after the late renowned architect.

The village is designed to provide natural ventilation. Stone is the primary building material, with arabesque windows, and high-arched roofs.

The village is comprised of 337 domed villas, each having a garden of 150sq. m.

MONEY & BUSINESS



17 companies approved

THE COMPANIES Committee of the Ministry of Economy, headed by Ahmed Fouad Atta, approved the establishment of 17 companies, 7 of which are joint stock companies whose authorised capital amounts to LE321mn. Ten others are limited liability companies. Eight companies work in trade, four in contracting, two in industry, two in the field of services and one in tourism.

The companies are located in Cairo, Giza, Alexandria and Hurgada, in addition to the new cities.

\$ 500 million authorized capital



\$ 100 million issued and paid up capital

Faisal Islamic Bank of Egypt

A computerized draw to select depositors for an all expenses paid Umra at the Prophet's Birthday took place at the head office of Faisal Bank on 15/7/1996

Depositors selected :

No.	Branch	Account No.	No.	Branch	Account No.
1	Assiut	3267	9	Dokki	1958
2	Tanta	293	10	Cairo	149658
3	Heliopolis	30625	11	Cairo	232528
4	Heliopolis	43790	12	Alexandria	75051
5	Cairo	107681	13	Alexandria	76472
6	Sohag	2570	14	Cairo	161392
7	Alexandria	25289	15	Cairo	41512
8	Heliopolis	37026			

Regulations:

- The depositor selected can grant his Umra ticket to one of the first or second degree relatives
- In case the depositor is a minor his custodian can benefit from the prize
- Depositors selected should apply to the bank within two weeks

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Egypt and Belgium cooperating to face the issue of dumping

AHMED El-Gowell, minister of trade and development said that the year 2002 will see a rise in the importance of textiles and ready-made clothing imports, falling within the framework of Egypt's commitment to the GATT, which will have the highest level of protection from customs duties. These remarks came at the opening of a seminar on dumping, which was convened by the Foreign Trade Sector of the Ministry of Trade and Development, and attended by Fakhreddin Abul-Ezz, head of the Export/Import Supervisory Board; El-Sayed Abul-Qumsan, head of the Foreign Trade Sector; Kamel El-Naggar, head of the

Customs Department and Abdel-Rahman Fawzi, head of the Anti-Dumping Organisation and two Belgian experts who work in a law firm specialised in investigating the issue of dumping.

Egyptian cotton fabric manufacturers are presently under fire from the European Union, which is charging them with dumping their products on European markets.

The minister stressed the importance of holding this conference, remarking that Egypt, for the first time, has the opportunity to apply a practical system which would prevent such illegal trade practices from taking place. This is further un-

derscored by the activities of the Anti-Dumping Organisation who, in cooperation with the Foreign Commerce Sector, are taking positive steps to assist Egyptian companies accused of dumping in European and African markets.

The minister explained that the Belgian experts who are cooperating with Egypt will assist companies in facing these accusations by giving them a better knowledge of the laws concerning the European market.

El-Sayed Abul-Qumsan, head of the Foreign Commerce Sector, explained that the conference comes within the framework of a series of conferences which be-

gan nearly 2 years ago, designed to give employees of the Anti-Dumping Organisation the expertise to assist Egyptian companies. The experts of the organisation are a scientific body which investigates such complaints against Egyptian companies and helps implement the appropriate measures and strategies to counteract and compensate for dumping.

On the other hand, the pair of Belgian experts have pointed to the efficiency of the Foreign Commerce Sector and the Anti-Dumping Organisation, regarding their determination and serious commitment to better understand the laws

and regulations dealing with dumping, saying that such positive efforts would go a long way in raising international trust of the companies involved.

Fawzi, said that workers of the organisation undergo short and intensive training sessions abroad to acquire expertise in their areas of specialisation in order to be better-equipped to handle such international issues.

These bilateral conferences and exchange programmes taking place between Egypt and Belgium go a long way in strengthening both diplomatic and social ties. It is hoped that similar cooperation will take place in the near future.

North Sinai governor: Further investments needed

NORTH SINAI Governorate occupies a unique geographic location. It has a moderate climate and rich resources. These features make it an important tourist attraction.

Mohamed Ahmed Ghiatt, governor of North Sinai, said that although the governorate's extensive coastline and clean environment has attracted many investors, the volume of investments is still disproportionate to its potentials.

The governorate has witnessed a jump in the reclamation and cultivation of land. Cultivated land rose from 6000 feddans in 1976 to 307,000 feddans in the current year. The governorate is renowned for its fruit and

vegetable produce.

North Sinai, also contains many natural reserves, such as El-Zaramik Reserve to which birds from Russia and Europe migrate every year.

Ghiatt explained that in the field of fishing, North Sinai Governorate has been most prosperous. Some 20,000 persons work in the fishing industry. Fish production is estimated at 3500 tons per year, a portion of which is exported. The governorate has an abundance of mineral resources such as marble and coal, salt and natural gas.

Ghiatt added that the volume of water that will be carried through Al-Salam Canal to

North Sinai Governorate is about 3.1 billion cubic metres annually. This water will help cultivate 1000 feddans surrounding the canal.

Ghiatt concluded by saying that the volume of investments is still not enough. Plans should be made to find ways of attracting investors and that facilities should be provided to achieve this aim. A step in this direction is currently underway, involving cooperation between different universities and research centres to define the places that have potential for tourist or industrial projects. This will guide investors to locations suitable for their projects.

Al-Ahram Weekly

Netanyahu's choice

Netanyahu's hawkish position on the peace process earned him ovations in the US Congress and support among the extremists in the Israeli Cabinet, but upon arriving in Egypt today, he will find that it has served only to fuel the anger of Egyptians.

Egypt and the rest of the Arab world is not interested in listening to more of his rhetoric about security for peace. Nor is the Arab world willing to set aside its desire in achieving regional stability and a comprehensive peace simply to further his domestic political agenda. In short, we are saying no to his "choice".

At stake is not just the future of the peace process, but the continuation of the peace that has already been achieved. To date, all facts point to the worst — that Netanyahu is more interested in promoting his platform than securing peace. This belligerence and misguided indignation, however, is a surefire way of deconstructing all the gains realised between Egypt and Israel since the signing of the Camp David accords.

Therefore, this visit is Netanyahu's real test. There will be no obvious, no heavy pat on the back, no vaccination, wavering or concession-making by the Egyptians upon his arrival. Diplomatic considerations demand that President Mubarak and the other Arab leaders at least give him a chance to state his objectives. Unfortunately, this basic courtesy is more than Netanyahu is willing to extend to Arafat.

What Egypt and the rest of the Arabs have no time for is another time-worn, rhetoric-laden soliloquy by the Israeli Prime Minister about security before peace. These statements may appeal to Zionist megalomaniacs in the cabinet and Republicans in the US Congress, but they carry no weight among the Arabs. If he truly wants security, then Netanyahu must work towards peace along the terms and guidelines of agreements reached with predecessors far more accomplished than him.

But, if what he seeks is, at best, a stalemate, and at worst, an escalation of tension and a dismantling of the peace process as a whole, then he should continue along the path he is now following. In either case, the Arabs have made abundantly clear their commitment to peace.

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Turning a blind eye

The Israeli government's inability to face facts squarely betrays an alarming and dangerous immaturity, writes Ibrahim Nafie



to scrutiny, would prove to be indefensible.

But whatever the cause of Netanyahu's fabrications it is essential that others expose and counter-act them.

Members of the American Congress in particular should take heed. Netanyahu's address to them, no more than a rat bag of fallacies, demonstrated both his ability to manipulate his audience and his inability to read the facts. "I will not allow the partition of Jerusalem," he announced to general applause, and in so doing managed to insinuate that it is the Palestinians and the Arabs who have demanded the partition of the city, though in fact no Palestinian or Arab official has ever made such a demand. Yet at the same time he disparaged the proposal for establishing a system of multi-party sovereignty over Jerusalem which would fulfill the needs and aspirations of both the Palestinians and the Israelis. His tangential rejection of the proposal contained the intimation that only possible solution to the issue of Jerusalem's status is Israeli sovereignty.

Quite naturally, in doing so, he contrived to overlook the fact that this alleged Israeli sovereignty is still considered illegitimate under international law, and in the eyes of most countries of the world, including the US.

In his attempt to portray himself as the custodian of American interests in the Middle East, a politician whose aims coincide with US regional interests, Netanyahu called for a stricter blockade against Iran and Iraq. And once again he turned a blind eye to facts known to all.

It was the Arab countries, including Egypt, that played the fundamental role in containing Iranian aggression, and thwarting Iran's expansionism, following the Iranian revolution. Indeed Israel was a major player in the Iran-Contra scandal which enabled Iran to circumvent the boycott and to obtain much needed military hardware. Netanyahu also seems to have conveniently forgotten that it was the Arab countries, foremost among which was Egypt, that spearheaded the diplomatic drive to repel the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. We realised

then that the leaders of Iraq had lost their senses, thinking that they could disregard their neighbours and behave just as they pleased, which, in short, appears to be what Netanyahu wants to do today.

As for Netanyahu's apprehensions about the threat of nuclear proliferation in the region, one need hardly remind him that it is Israel that introduced nuclear arms into the Middle East, that Israel still refuses to adhere to any international agreement subjecting its nuclear installations to inspections, and continues to resist Egyptian and Arab calls to declare the Middle East a region free of weapons of mass destruction.

Another myth Netanyahu tried to perpetuate in his speech to Congress was that Israel was both the sole victim of, and the only power in the region capable of fighting terrorism. The fact remains, however, that terrorism threatens all countries in the Middle East, and indeed many other areas of the globe. Moreover, it was Egypt, with the backing of other Arab countries, that called for, organised and hosted the Sharm Al-Sheikh peace-

makers summit against terrorism. The primary purpose of this conference was to lead support to Israel after it was shaken by terrorist attacks last February and March.

Those who believe that all they have to do to get something is to decide, simply, that they want it, are dangerously misguided. Netanyahu, though, has yet to learn this lesson. He believes that he can single-handedly renounce the principles upon which the peace process has been founded since the Madrid conference, particularly the principle of land for peace, without jeopardising the entire region, including, and perhaps foremost of all, Israel. If the peace process provoked its opponents, a small minority, to escalate their acts of violence, a freeze in the peace process will bring to the minds of the majority whose hopes for a better future will have been frustrated by Netanyahu's policies.

Arab governments, especially the Palestinian National Authority, have succeeded in restraining extremists with the promise of a future in which peace prevails. The only effect of Netanyahu's policies, however, will be to lend weight to the extremists' arguments and to help swell their numbers. Israel will be the first to feel the sting of their venom.

Leaders with Netanyahu's mindset have a tendency to believe that they can realise contradictory aims. They are unable to perceive the contradictions in the aims they set for themselves. Netanyahu thinks that he can achieve peace and security for Israel and establish friendly relations with the Arabs while holding onto Arab lands. Such are the delusions of a childish mind, incapable of realising that everything has a price and that in order to obtain something one must give something back in return.

Probing the future [2]

Forwards or backwards?

In a second article on issues related to probing the future, Mohamed Sid-Ahmed argues that conquering the unknown is not necessarily always for the best

Who could have imagined in 1985 that the Soviet Union had only six more years to live and that the Berlin Wall would fall four years later? Closer to home, who could have imagined just a few months ago that the Middle East peace process would be totally requested and Security Council Resolution 242 rejected as the basis for a comprehensive peace? Surprises are always possible when it comes to forecasting the future, which can never be reduced to an extrapolation of the present. Any attempt to forecast the future necessarily involves imagination and creative thinking. At the same time, it must be academic, dispassionate, and approached in the same way fundamental science is approached, that is, not only with an eye on the applied consequences or the desired results.

Although this dispassionate approach to future probing is absolutely necessary, its importance is all too often underestimated. Occasionally a development that will have great bearing on the shape of the future can be imperceptible in the present, a phenomenon some have come to define as "resonance", "positive feedback" or the "butterfly effect". This last term is used to remind us that something as trivial as the fluttering of a butterfly's wings could, in given conditions, trigger a cumulative effect that can eventually build up and erupt in the form of a storm in one place or another. It is thus vital when making projections of the future to take into account changes that can be imperceptible in the present, even if, more often than not, their potential to radically affect the shape of the future does not materialise.

For example, it is unlikely that the mounting wave of Islamic radicalism sweeping the Arab/Islamic world will subside because of external factors, even if it does not hold all the answers to the complex philosophical and moral dilemmas facing the modern world, such as those arising in the field of genetic engineering. I believe the most likely scenario is that Islam will witness developments from within, something comparable to what Luther and Calvin did for Christianity, a sort of updating reformist movement

emerging from inside the Islamic framework itself. Such a scenario is scarcely perceptible in the present, but a successful attempt to reconcile between authenticity (asala) and modernism (Tagdid), which are currently regarded as mutually exclusive, cannot be discounted. Two forerunners in this field have been the late Imam Fode, who was assassinated for his pains, and Dr Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid, currently in self-imposed exile to avoid a similar fate.

The notions of authenticity and modernity, and the dialectical relationship between the two, have long been the subject of heated debate. The debate has become even more intense, as the enormous difficulties hindering attempts to cope with modernity invest authenticity with greater appeal and importance. One question raised by this debate is which of the two notions should serve as the frame of reference: in other words, should we be future or past oriented? Can the two notions become complementary factors in a duality? Can both retain equal pertinence?

Similar paradigms are raised by the notion of progress. Is the human species moving forwards or backwards? True, history is non-linear, and there is no mechanical "historical determinism" to ensure that the quality of life will inevitably improve. On the upside, humankind's knowledge of its environment is expanding exponentially. Thanks to the Hubble telescope, we have been able to see pictures definitively establishing that the universe contains not thousands, but billions upon billions of galaxies. Until only recently, the quark was assumed to be the smallest element in the universe; today this assumption is being questioned. The universe of which we are becoming aware is expanding without limits. The downside is that as knowledge moves forward in absolute terms, it moves backwards in relative terms. In other words, the sphere of what we know expands at a slower rate than the sphere of what we come to realise we do not know.

This paradox is not limited to academic problems of little practical application or to scientific speculation only, but has a direct bearing on problems af-

flicting the everyday life of societies in general and, ultimately, the very survival of humankind. For any specific society, what counts more is its relative position vis-à-vis other societies than whatever progress it has accomplished in absolute terms. The criterion is whether it is progressing or receding in comparison to others, rather than whether it is achieving progress per se.

In more fundamental terms, however, it is hard to say whether the human species is acquiring greater mastery over its environment as the horizons of science and knowledge expand, or whether it is, on the contrary, increasingly at the mercy of "uncontrollable" forces. One basic aspect of this problem is related to the new characteristics of modern technology which, for the first time in the history of humankind, does not only "scratch" the surface of the planet, but can eventually damage it irreversibly. Huge technological projects, many with the ability to affect the ecological balance of the planet, are designed in terms of objectives with quantifiable and predictable effects. But what of the unforeseeable side-effects, those whose negative implications for the future of humankind could be more important — and damaging — than the project's predictable effects? A case in point is Chernobyl.

In statistical terms, and given that we now know how damaging modern technology can be to our habitat, it is only a matter of time before we find a worst-case scenario on our hands. For we are playing a dangerous game, as we try to balance the undeniably beneficial effects of technological progress with its unknown negative side-effects. No one can deny that the quality of life will improve every time the known effects of technology are not offset by its unpredictable negative effects. But it is enough for the unknown negative side-effects to prove more important than the predicted positive effects only once for the entire planet to explode. The science of probability teaches that such a scenario is bound to happen sooner or later.

The poetry of language

By Naguib Mahfouz

Islamic Arab literature comprised the main component of my early education. I read the *Qur'an* and the *Sunna* of the Prophet alongside such classics as *Khatib Al-Ashraf*. One title I well remember from those days is *Al-Mawarith* (The Inheritance) by *Abul-Arab* (Excerpt from *Arab Literature*), a volume that began with selections of pre-Islamic poetry and ended with *Al-Mawarith* and *Al-Bihar*. Such were the titles of the books that I read then, but I do not think that they had a profound influence on my literary style.

When I first began writing it was in *Arabic*, even though the channel of my ideas was, at the time, coming under attack from many writers and intellectuals. Yet it was *Arabic* that I chose when writing some of my most difficult, "real" novels, a choice that forced many questions, not least how to convincingly give dialogue to characters in *Arabic*.

But the fact that many who read my novels are not consciously aware of whether my characters are speaking *fusha* or *ammiya* is, I like to think, proof that I overcame the problem. I have always thought *fusha* particularly suitable for literature, and hope that my novels, greatly influenced by my reading of classical Arab literature, have persuaded others of the validity of this view.

Based on an interview by Mohamed Salmany

The Press This Week Who loves Bibi?

Al-Ahram: "It may be Binyamin Netanyahu's right to try to influence US public opinion the way he sees fit. And US public opinion can admire and applaud whomever it pleases. But nobody should forget that there is another 'public opinion' which is of utmost importance — the Arab, the regional or the Middle Eastern, whatever you want to call it." (Mohamed Abdel-Moneim, 14 July)

Al-Wafd: "If it is true that the Turkish-Israeli military pact is not directed against us, whom is it directed against?" (Magdi Mehanna, 14 July)

Al-Ahram: "In Washington, the time was opportune for Netanyahu to give voice to his extremist and racist views. The US elections are around the corner and Clinton is in such a weak position that he can only look on lovingly at the exploits of his new champion." (Samia El-Said, 14 July)

Al-Akhbar: "The meeting of the foreign ministers of the Damascus Declaration countries is an opportunity to formulate a response to many issues, particularly the plight of the Middle East peace process in the wake of the provocative statements and intransigent stances of Netanyahu — which have brought the peace talks back to square one. Such a response will serve as a new warning to Israel to re-examine its anti-peace moves." (Editorial, 14 July)

Al-Ahram: "The extraordinary acclaim accorded to Netanyahu — who never had any local or international role in the history of Israel or the Middle East — by US congressmen, is not due to any special contribution towards peace and stability in the region nor to his great sacrifices in the building and support of Israel... It is an attempt to placate Jewish influence and the Zionist lobby which are highly active during US election time." (Salama Ahmed Salama, 15 July)

Al-Gomhuriya: "Since Netanyahu became prime minister, his prisons have been perpetrating torture in its worst possible forms against the Palestinians. Yet Ne-

anyahu speaks night and day of 'security'... but what security is this which allows such dirty crimes against Palestinian prisoners who cannot be blamed if, upon their release, they seek vengeance against all Israelis." (Samir Ragab 15 July)

October: "In Cairo, Netanyahu might find — at the official level — somebody to talk to. But at the popular level, no one will want to see him or hear from him... He has created an adverse public opinion which perceives Israel's ostensible desire to get rid of the climate of violence as a mask behind which Israel seems to exploit the Arabs economically and defeat them culturally and spiritually without recourse to an expensive war." (Ragab El-Banna, 14 July)

Al-Arab: "Under all circumstances, a dialogue with Turkey is desirable and necessary. But it should avoid the middle of accepting the Turkish-Israeli alliance, then rejecting it outright, then accepting it again, when it is rejected by the Turkish people themselves but accepted by governments only because this is the wish of the US — the top dog!" (Gadaf Aref, 15 July)

Al-Shaab: "President Mubarak's quick visit to Turkey... signals the turning of the course of our foreign policy in the right direction... the visit in itself was a success... It was a positive step." (Magdi Ahmed Hussein, 16 July)

Al-Akhbar: "Human Rights organisations in the Middle East accuse Israel of many violations in Palestinian territories... Yet Netanyahu does not stop claiming that Israel is the oasis of freedom and human rights in the region... Which freedom is he talking about? What sort of democracy is he boasting of, knowing that real power in Israel is in the hands of its generals? And what human rights is he referring to while disregarding the rights of the Palestinians to their land and to self-determination?... Astonishingly, he was applauded by the congressmen of the US; the great pole whose constitution is based on freedom, justice and equality." (Galal Dawid, 15 July)



Each US administration produces its own shuttle diplomat and currently it is Warren Christopher. A man, perpetually open, leaning statements, a large ear like an old gramophone horn to facilitate dialogue, these are Christopher's most obvious attributes. But what do we really see? There is Kissinger's nose, the neck of Schultz, Habib's mouth, Haig's shoulders and the hair of Cyrus Vance in short Christopher is a collage of US policy in the region for over a quarter of a century. It is an image that pushes and pulls in opposite directions, pressuring the Arabs while showing leniency to Israel.

compiled by Hala Sagor

Close up

Salama A. Salama

Time to take a stand

Binyamin Netanyahu arrives in Cairo today on his first visit to an Arab state after single-handedly stalling the peace process. He arrives with a clearly defined agenda, exhaustively described by the Israeli prime minister when he delineated his government's programme before his recent visit to the US. It is a description supplemented not only by the communiqués issued following his meetings with officials in the American administration, but also during the press conference held following Netanyahu's return from the US.

From the moment of his election until now Netanyahu has encountered nothing, it would seem, that could possibly cause him to change his mind. Indeed, after his return from the US — Israel's sponsor and the sponsor of peace in the Middle East — he announced that Washington had done no arm-twisting. Rather, he said, Washington had been supportive and understanding of his hard-line policies.

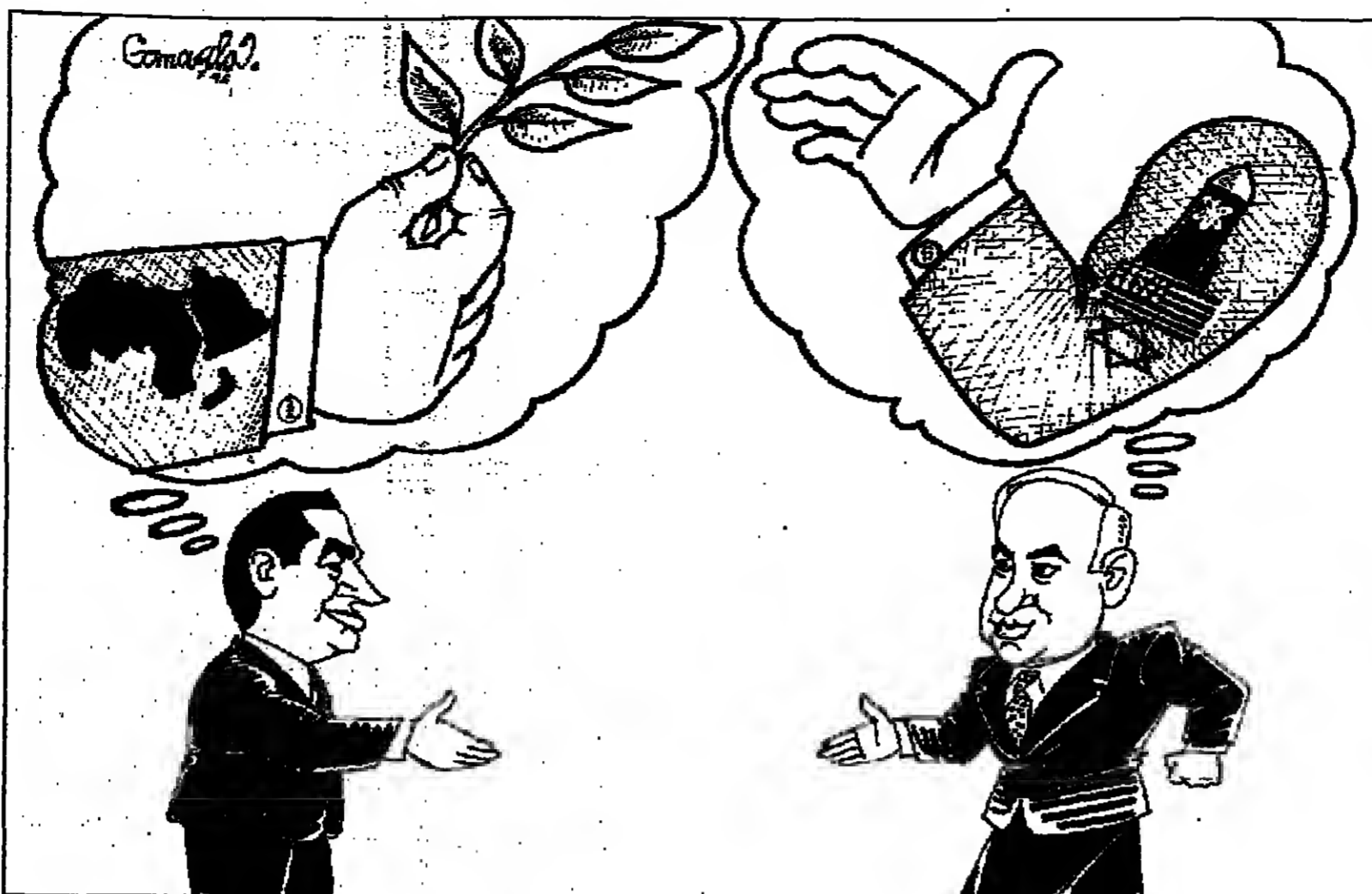
What can we expect, then, from his visit? Given the open support Netanyahu received from Congress and the tacit support he received from Clinton, he is likely to offer only new projects to expand Israeli settlements, greater restrictions on the Palestinian National Authority and further delays regarding the withdrawal of Israeli troops from Hebron.

But reading the communiqué issued by the signatories to the Damascus Declaration following their recent meeting one could easily suppose that they had not heard Netanyahu's anti-peace declarations in front of the US Congress. While expressing their "grave anxiety" over Netanyahu's insistence on concentrating Israel's occupation of Arab territory and reaffirming their support of Syria's just demands, the communiqué made no mention of the scenarios that might ensue should Netanyahu persist in pursuing policies inimical to peace. Should Arab countries be looking for further developments in Netanyahu's thinking before fixing their own positions I fear they are in for a long wait.

It is interesting to note that the former Israeli prime minister, Peres, is now rushing to support Arab demands in order to rescue the peace process. It would be foolhardy, however, simply to hope that pressures from within Israel will force Netanyahu to modify his positions.

Several days ago the French Minister of Defence announced that any future cooperation between Israel and France in the field of security will depend on progress made in peace talks between the Arabs and Israel. Surely the French action has opened a window of opportunity for the Arabs, who might justifiably suggest that all the other countries — including the US and members of the EU — that rushed to conclude military and security agreements with Israel in light of the peace process might suspend the implementation of such agreements pending progress towards peace.

But it is an unfortunate fact that, in the end, Arab countries are in no position to ask other international parties to do anything until they themselves adopt a serious position, one that draws a clear line between the sincere desire for peace and the cynical manipulation of peace as a slogan.



The domestic dimensions of peace

Peace negotiations are redundant unless a common ground of understanding exists between the parties. So far this has not been the case, argues **Tahseen Basheer**

The Arab media has been flooded by an avalanche of commentaries on the impact of Netanyahu's victory in the Israeli prime ministerial elections. A great quantity of this verbiage has concentrated on the ideological aspects of the election results, predicting nothing but doom and gloom for the future of the peace process. Any measured analysis of what has happened, however, and the Arab reaction to events, reveals certain subtleties that have been all too easily swamped by the tidal wave of emotion and exaggeration.

While it would be impossible to completely write off all the negative scenarios that have emerged since Netanyahu's election one must nonetheless construct such scenarios with a sense of reality and avoid the indulgence involved in declaring supposedly self-fulfilling prophecies.

Many recent diagnoses seem to be predicated on an erroneous assumption: that a genuine, durable and comprehensive peace can be reached without first creating a common ground of understanding between Arabs and Israelis. Peace, it is assumed, is a formula that can be magically concocted from the crude calculations of balance of power, and once concocted, it will then be automatically implemented by, or imposed on, all the concerned parties.

This antiseptic peace, negotiated in secrecy between the holders of power in Arab capitals and their Israeli counterparts, reflects an essential misunderstanding of the nature of such protracted conflicts as the Arab-Israeli confrontation. It is a misunderstanding that has resulted in a view so opaque as to be incapable of taking on board such seemingly simple considerations as the effects of the information revolution.

It is only by studying the record of the political players, and their constituencies of support, that one can realistically assess changes in the political arena and approach a more convincing picture of what is happening.

At this juncture it is perhaps sufficient to raise just one question: Can we attain the kind of peace to which we aspire without having first convinced a legitimate majority on the other side of the validity of our concept of peace? Conversely, can the Israelis reach a peace that we can accept without first convincing a legitimate majority of Arabs of the validity of that peace? Those who refuse to answer this question seem to think that peace can only be imposed, a position that begs a more significant question: imposed on and by whom?

The documents that underwrite the peace process, from Security Council

Resolution 242 to the articles that established the Madrid conference, exclude the possibility of any crude imposition of peace by one party over the other. The Madrid formula leaves the task of weaving the common grounds for agreements to the process of negotiation. But negotiations which deal with such emotional issues and deeply held positions as those involved in the Arab-Israeli conflict are based on political and religious belief systems as well as national interests. Such intractable issues, quite patently, will not be resolved in the absence of positive popular support for the policy-makers.

Netanyahu's victory, by less than 30,000 votes, indicates that neither the Arab nor Israeli political constituencies have managed to engineer the kind of dialogue that might create the common ground necessary for joint political action. The concentration on the various bilateral negotiating teams, which conduct their activities in secret, has resulted in the almost total marginalisation of matters relating to communication between the two publics — i.e. the Arab and Israeli public — between whom peace is being negotiated.

Had such communication been conducted at a sufficiently vibrant, lively, truthful and creative level, I am sure that support for the peace process would have outweighed the desire to

drag feet and argue for inertia and delay.

On the other side, had the Israelis paid more attention to what the Arab public felt about peace, they would have come to different conclusions than those reached by Netanyahu and his supporters in the last Israeli election. The Netanyahu view is that the Arab public do not count, and that they have no active role in shaping the policies of Arab governments. All he has to do, he assumes, is to exhibit the crude face of power, display Israel's qualitative and quantitative edge, and by presto, Arab policy-makers will accommodate Israel. Such a discounting of Arab public opinion reflects Israel's failure to understand Arab decision-making processes.

Arab public opinion was dazzled by the massive salesmanship indulged in by former Prime Minister Peres in marketing his concept of "the new Middle East". Many balloons were unleashed at the Casablanca and Amman summits, heralding the arrival of a magical new Middle East that would somehow solve all of our problems of poverty and scarcity. No one has bothered to ask serious questions, such as how many projects, besides tourism, have actually been implemented; where the capital came from to finance these projects; and who will benefit from them. The new Middle East turned out to

be a case of sales talk overkill, a mirage of pipe dreams.

The most harmful consequence of summits such as Casablanca and Amman is that they promise everything, without being able to deliver, and inevitably result in disappointment. People are rightly suspicious, not just the Arab public but also the Israelis. Nobody was taken in by the sales talk of the new Middle East. For Israelis, peace proved a less important priority than security, and preserving the Jewish character of their state and those, within Israel, antagonistic to a rapid transformation of the area into a symmetrical peace, managed to portray the issue as if it was one of security versus peace. The electorate opted for security, a euphemism for continued hegemony and domination.

But the fact of the matter is that peace, security, and prosperity must go hand in hand. This is not an either/or question.

What we must answer, though, is the following question: What kind of dialogue should be conducted between Arab and Israeli constituencies? Unfortunately, this is precisely the question that is not being addressed in either Israel or the Arab states. How, then, can an answer emerge?

The writer is a senior fellow at the United States Institute of Peace.

Bumps, but no potholes

Egypt's relations with the US are not as smooth as they could be, writes **Mohamed Wahby**. But there is no reason to suppose that a full-blown crisis will develop

Concerns are again rife that US-Egyptian relations are heading onto rocky ground. This is the impression one gets by reading Egyptian papers. No doubt there are some indications that things may not be as they should between two countries which, since the '70s, have dramatically transformed their adversarial, often hostile, relations into a growing and unique partnership.

But to jump to the conclusion that these relations are heading towards a crisis is to overstate the problem. Indeed, there are some bilateral and multilateral problems stemming from the two countries' Middle East policies. Foremost is the central role that Israel occupies in the US strategic perception of our region. This role, however, is a given which Egypt has accepted since President Sadat dramatically changed its relations with the US. Frankly, one could not have happened without the other. To complain about this fact now does not serve any purpose. What is possible, on the other hand, is to try — as Egypt has been doing — to offset this Israeli factor by maximising Egyptian-American and Arab-American interests while emphasising the benefits that all countries, including Israel, could reap from a comprehensive and just peace. The US is also aware that it could benefit from the realisation of this long-sought objective. Only then could it reconcile its interests on both sides of the fence.

Unfortunately, the Israeli factor in Egyptian-American relations has been exacerbated by the results of the Israeli elections. American policy-makers were as jolted as the Arabs by the ascension to power of Binyamin Netanyahu. Clinton's effort to defeat him is widely known. One of the most embarrassing moments I have witnessed in the White House occurred when a correspondent asked Clinton during a joint press conference how he could explain to Netanyahu his support for Shimon Peres. Haltingly, his face rapidly turning crimson, Clinton stammered: "It didn't really need that much explaining." He was still searching for an answer as the journalists stirred, when Netanyahu interrupted him to say: "Mr President, we did not discuss the election results." Clinton swallowed and, with a still more embarrassed smile, repeated parrot-like: "We did not discuss it all. That's right."

This certainly was a new Clinton: one overshadowed in eloquence, youthfulness, and the ability to use the media by a visiting dignitary from a small country who deliberately sought to reverse the roles by acting as if he were the head of the superpower. The conference bordered on the pathetic, Clinton yielding to Netanyahu's rejection of the land-for-peace principle in the Syrian-Israeli negotiations, which in effect meant the end of these negotiations. Clinton also almost accepted Netanyahu's definition

of security as an exclusively Israeli requirement. And on the question of settlements, Clinton sheepishly defended the US position but shied away from referring to the settlements as "obstacles to peace". Clinton failed to elicit from Netanyahu even his acceptance to meet with Arafat, let alone a promise to pull Israeli troops out of Hebron. Still, there were some differences between the two leaders.

It was in Congress, however, that Netanyahu's reception surpassed the expectations of the most ardent American Zionists. His speech was interrupted by fourteen standing ovations, the loudest and longest in support of his vow that "there will never be a revision of Jerusalem... we will never be driven out of any quarter or any neighbourhood, any street of our eternal capital."

Netanyahu's visit was a striking demonstration of how large the Israeli factor will loom in Egyptian-American relations during the coming four years if he delivers on his declarations. This applies to the bilateral and multilateral relations involved in the Arab-Israeli conflict. On the bilateral level, the Jewish lobby should be expected to stir up trouble for Egypt in the coming clash of interests with Israel. This was demonstrated in the past when Egypt opposed the exemption of Israel from Washington's crusade against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Other issues may also be revived in Congress using various smoke screens: human rights, democracy, the implementation of economic reform programmes, corruption stories and Egypt's relations with Libya. Efforts may also be intensified to blackmail Egypt by threatening to cut off US aid or to de-link it from aid to Israel.

In fact, some of these issues were raised, albeit indirectly, by Netanyahu in Congress. He played for cheers, condemning the absence of democracy and the lack of respect for human rights in the Arab world regardless of the fact that Israel, according to the US State Department, has one of the worst records of human rights abuse. Instead of the agreed-upon, in dealing with the conflict in the Middle East, he offered one based on the "three pillars" of "security, reciprocal fulfilment of obligations, and democracy". The crucial element of land has no place in Netanyahu's thinking. He is an openly expansionist Zionist whose firm belief in territorial maximalism and reverence for power was handed down to him through his father by Vladimir Jabotinsky, the founder of the Revisionist Zionist movement.

At the joint press conference Clinton made it plain that he differed with Netanyahu on the Palestinian issue. Later, the administration reiterated the "bedrock American idea" of a land-for-peace exchange. But it

is equally true that Clinton's "peace team", headed by Dennis Ross, seems confused and dispirited after Netanyahu's visit. With the approaching elections, even Clinton cannot be expected to seriously challenge the Israeli prime minister's policies.

Netanyahu's exceptional ability to sell his ideas to Congress and the American public will no doubt create more problems in Egyptian-American relations. He has already taken indirect swipes at Egypt for "triggering round after round of hostile diplomacy" against Israel.

The problem is that, while Egypt has accepted Israel's place in US policy as given, and has coped with it chiefly through increasingly dynamic diplomacy, the US still finds it difficult to accept Egypt's place and natural role in the Arab world. Even when this fact is accepted, the US seeks to bring Egypt's role into line with American regional interests; if this does not occur, Egypt is condemned as playing "a double game".

Egypt and the US clearly do not see eye to eye on problems related to Libya, Sudan or Iraq. Equally problematic from the US perspective, in the words of a prominent American thinker, is what it sees as "Egypt's interference in [US] relations with other Arab countries". Egypt's advice against rushing the normalisation of Arab relations with Israel was not quite in line with US policy. There are also differences with Egypt over whether the "Islamic" fundamentalist movement should be dealt with "by repression or co-optation". But this problem has been moved to the back burner. Omar Abdel-Rahman's chapter is closed, and he now languishes in a US jail.

More recently, the two countries clashed over whether Boutros Ghali's term as UN secretary-general should be renewed. The US' vow to veto the renewal, made in a most provocative manner on the eve of Egypt's successful effort to convene the first Arab summit in six years, was seen by the Egyptian press as an attempt to "put Egypt in its place", if not an attempt to "humiliate" it. Worse was the flare-up caused by a leakage from the CIA to the *Washington Times* just one day before the summit, threatening Egypt with sanctions for allegedly modernising its Scud missiles. In this particular case, however, the Egyptian press was seen by both US and Egyptian officials in Washington to be over-reacting because the US "never discussed this problem officially or unofficially with Egypt".

But one American official went further. While emphasising that the administration had nothing to do with reports attributed to the CIA (meaning it might have been the work of a rogue element), he hinted to me that the campaign in the Egyptian press might have been inspired by "an agitational element in Egyptian foreign policy" which surfaces from time to

time and then dies away, but not before leaving a cumulative impact on the Egyptian public's perception of the US. In his opinion, this could well become a self-fulfilling prophecy, causing a real crisis in Egyptian-American relations. But he quickly added: "President Mubarak is there to control the temperature of our relations by his timely statements."

Many American observers, however, believe that Congress and the American public need to be educated about Egypt's importance for the US, which, for the past 20 years, has been bound up solely with the peace process. There is little recognition of Egypt's role as "a friend if not an ally", as a fulcrum of stability and a leading moderate force with "a pacifying influence" in the region. Egyptians need, now more than ever, to make use of the US media in minimising the challenge of Netanyahu, a master of public relations and of the art of bow to relate to the Americans. Contacts between the two countries' intellectuals should also be intensified. Hardly a week passes without an Israeli intellectual, politician, or journalist addressing one American group or another, whereas Egyptians confine their relations to the official level. On the other hand, Americans should do more to explain to the Egyptian public the complexity of the US decision-making process, of which the administration is only one component.

A few positive steps, however, have been taken to remedy the situation. For instance, the Egyptian business community has been undertaking successful annual tours of the US, knocking on the doors of policy makers, communicators and corporations. Still more important is the Mubarak-Gore initiative to form a "presidential committee" of entrepreneurs from both sides to encourage economic cooperation.

But there remains the perennial question of US economic aid to Egypt, which seems to have become an increasing irritant in relations with the US. No doubt this aid has played an important role in Egypt's economy, and may not outlive its usefulness before the process of economic reform is completed in the next three years or so. But the sooner Egypt liberates itself from this aid, the less leverage the pro-Israeli lobby in Congress will have against it, and the healthier the relations between the two countries will become.

In the meantime, differences and even problems will continue; but both sides emphasise that efforts to manage them will continue, so that they may not add up to a pattern leading to a crisis in their relations. Eventually, however, one should not reasonably expect Egypt to have fewer problems with Washington than such close US allies as Britain, France or Japan.

The writer is the bureau chief of *Dar Al-Hilal* in Washington, DC.

Soapbox

Farewell to aid

Despite the US administration's approval of next year's USAID programme one cannot yet dismiss the possibility that levels of aid will, in the near future, be drastically reduced. It is essential, therefore, that aid recipients, including Egypt, prepare themselves for this possibility.

Any reduction, or indeed cancellation, of aid is hardly a thrilling prospect, especially since it is likely to lead to a similar reduction in levels of investment. Yet any drop in USAID funding need not be catastrophic. Egypt does have the ability — though to capitalise on it will require co-ordination and consistent efforts — to thrive without being dependent on foreign aid. The fact that for the last three years the country has financed its own wheat and flour imports without incurring a budget crisis or trade deficit is sufficient proof that we do have the wherewithal to be independent.

It can be argued that a reduction in levels of USAID funding may be advantageous. Such aid is not, after all, unconditional. It obliges Egypt to use American experts, to act on their recommendations, and to buy American goods transported by American vessels at a far from competitive rate. A vast proportion of America's foreign aid, then, is recouped by the American economy. Indeed, according to one USAID official, for every \$7 given in Egypt, \$6 are actually spent in the US.

That the bulk of the assistance we receive is useless to us serves only to emphasise the importance of working towards greater self-sufficiency. This means encouraging higher levels of investment, and steps in this direction have already been taken by the government. They are steps in the right direction, since every dollar spent on investment breaks one more link in the chain of dependency on aid.



This week's Soapbox speaker is deputy editor-in-chief of *Al-Mussawwar* magazine.

Abdel-Qader Shohayeb

The bone beneath

Nigel Ryan pieces together the fragments to which Ahmed Morsi is drawn

Several years ago Ahmed Morsi, an Egyptian artist who for many years now has been based in New York, staged a very impressive exhibition at the Mashabiya Gallery comprising small-scale prints collected under the title *Cavafy Suite*. On first walking into his current exhibition, at the Centre of Arts, Zamalek, one might suppose that his most recent work could not be further away from those elegant miniatures.

It takes just eight of Morsi's paintings to fill two of the centre's basement galleries. The canvases are huge, often completed on two frames and then hung together, a device that several years ago was virtually *de rigueur* for the serious post-modernist but which here appears to be a matter of convenience — considerations of storage, shipping and handling — rather than a fashionable conceit. Yet, size notwithstanding, there appears — on the basis of this exhibition and the much earlier show at the Mashabiya — to be a remarkable thematic continuity in Morsi's production.

Morsi's obsessions have remained consistent. And perhaps it is only by cross-referencing the two exhibitions that one can begin to decipher the peculiar imagery that Morsi chooses to repeat. The *Cavafy Suite* ostensibly declared its Alexandrian allegiance, co-opting the poet's recreation of the Greek world and juxtaposing it with the 20th century Mediterranean city that in Cavafy's contemporary poems was made to serve as an index of the poet's own homo-eroticism. But whether in dealing with the ancient or modern Cavafy's peculiar brand of nostalgia, which has proved such a powerful attraction for so many of his admirers, was always sexually loaded — often precious, but loaded nonetheless.

And so too Morsi's *Suite*. Some of the exhibits looked like pre-production sketches for Fassbinder's screen adaptation of *Querelle de Brest*. It was as if Jean Cocteau had sat by the harbour



Real horses run, though in many of Ahmed Morsi's paintings the horse is no more than its skull

in Alexandria sketching his favourite sights. So much for the twentieth century city. Ptolemaic Alexandria, and the ancient Greek world of the eastern Mediterranean, was represented more obliquely. A creaking statue, the city itself, would stumble to the corner of several prints, chased by a horse — perhaps even by the horse, by Bucephalus. And what appears in Morsi's most recent work? Slap bang in the middle of a circular table lies the skull of the same horse seen in the *Cavafy Suite*. It is

much bigger, of course, than the skull that appears in the prints, but it is unmistakably the same. So Bucephalus, Alexander's horse, the mount from which he conquered the world, has made it onto a bourgeois dining table, to be surrounded by Alexandrian hostesses from Cavafy's cosmopolitan modern city, clad in thin, acid coloured cocktail gowns, who hardly deign to notice the creature, half man, half statue, who crouches beneath the table, lamenting, one might assume, a more ex-

citing past.

These poor hybrids, part statue, part human, crop up in many of the paintings at the Centre of Arts. In *The Last Supper* they include a grotesque child. Everyone is balanced precariously on a rock, with an angry looking sea licking their toes in what is, really, no more than a reworking of Gericault's *Raft of Medusa*.

In *Coming from the Sea* they are calmer. The vivid tonalities are replaced by more measured colours, sand tones reminiscent of Pavis de Chavannes. Here they are, six men/states on the beach, divided into two groups of three.

These figures seldom communicate, and when they do it is not with the spectator but among themselves. The spaces they occupy are sealed, ambiguous, monochrome landscapes that do not have gone on, or what will go on, is entirely, deliciously prurient.

Even in *Adam and Eve*, a painting with whose plot line we are surely all familiar, the narrative will not run straight. Eve holds the apple behind her back, but Adam is too busy waving a flag bearing an image of a chimney emitting smoke to be tempted. Hard to believe, in this particular version of the expulsion from Eden, that it is Eve who set the balls of corruption rolling.

The *New York Interior* gives out onto a vast, de Chirico piazza. Assembled on a table are two fire hydrants, one erect, the other upturned. Beside them is the skull of a horse. A figure wanders through the space beyond the table, a clothes horse, literally a dummy, headless, armless, in a chiffon tea gown. No Venus she, just another cosmopolitan extra from the city that never was.

The only real woman, it seems, appears in *Woman in Red*. She lifts her green man above her head in what appears to be a swooning dance. But look carefully beneath the tattered hem of her swirling scarlet dress and what do you see?

What else but a cloven hoof.

Cinema

Anyone for lobster

Estakozza is given a second lease of life in cinema houses as it is released in resort towns in the hope of catching the summer crowds. Mohamed Shebl, though, finds this particular shellfish less alluring the second time round



A holiday hit? Ahmed Zaki and Raghdha battle it out in *Estakozza*

Estakozza (Lobsters), Inas El-Degheidi's most recent film, is based loosely on Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*. We had better make that very, very loosely. The script was reworked — yet again — for Egyptian cinema by veteran scriptwriter Abdel-Halim Adib.

One can only sympathise with poor old Shakespeare who must be turning somersaults in his grave.

The main question is: Does anyone really want to see this or other films in the same vein? Apparently yes. *Estakozza* was, after all, an attempt to replicate the success of *Kabouria* (Crabs), an earlier Zaki/Raghdha vehicle. And already plans are underway for yet another piece of crustacea, with *Gambari Bel Mayoneise* (Shrimps with Mayonnaise).

Seafood, mind you, is not the only dish served on the gastro-celluloidic menu. *Makarana Bel Salsa* (Macaroni with Tomato Sauce) is already in pre-production and will soon be served, while last year, named to appeal, no doubt, to Middle Eastern palates, we were served *Tamta Bel Shatta* (Falafel with Hot Pepper). One wonders, can *Foul* or *Tahina* really be that far away?

But if we return for the time being to the sea-food page of our menu, and have a closer look at *Estakozza*, we discover that what we are in fact faced with is a potentially fatal overdose of cholesterol.

The Taming of the Shrew has transcended both time and language barriers. Franco Zeffirelli's film version, with Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton would, one might have thought, have been the ultimate screen version of the play. In Egypt the late Fatin Abdel-Wahab had al-

ready directed *Ah Min Hawaa* (Beware of Eve), which starred Lohia Abdel-Aziz and Rushdi Abaza. One might, therefore, have expected the poor old shrew to have been laid to rest. But no. Once more she has been resurrected, to be flogged mercilessly by Inas El-Degheidi and her cast.

In Ahmed Zaki and Raghdha *Estakozza* boasts two popular and fairly lovable stars. They should manage, at least, to be credible. But the problem with this vehicle is that, apart from bordering on soft-core porn, it is a film that demands to be taken seriously. Apparently we are supposed to believe that the film has a feminist sub-text, that it will

argue, till the bitter end, in defence of women's inalienable demands for... what? Things get messy right from the start when Raghdha is presented as a female John Wayne. In dirty, tattered jeans, she drives her jeep like she was in a formula one grand prix. Her extra-bleached blonde hair is left to puff like it was going to blow the whole house down and her language would make a sailor blush. As a matter of fact, almost everything she and her colleagues do for the rest of the picture makes most of the audience blush.

The entire premise of the picture is that she kicks Zaki with her enormous boots in such a way as to unman him, and then

spends the rest of the film nursing him back to normality. In the process, every trick in the book is used. The results are bewildering to some, offensive to others, and agreeable only to those who stood in line or bought over-priced tickets from touts specifically to practice their wolf whistles.

It would be unfair to overlook the superb cinematography by Mohamed Ahmed or the slick editing by Salwa Bekir, but the music, and especially the songs, amount to overkill.

Estakozza, in a lobster-shell, has Zaki playing the part of an interior decorator somewhere in Hurgada, though the choice of location is totally irrelevant. He

is engaged to Adila, brought to the screen by none other than Dina, the belly-dancer, and somewhere on the desert road becomes locked in a rather long though quite innocent embrace with his fiancée. Enter Raghdha, the dragon lady. She starts shrieking like a howling banshee, kicking at vehicle and driver alike. She considers, it becomes apparent, that the embrace symbolises man's enslavement of woman. After this encounter she proceeds on her journey with her black belt karate female commando brigade only to find that the villa of her dreams is actually being decorated by the aforementioned slave driver. An even bigger onslaught commences, during which the hapless Zaki receives the ill-fated blow beneath the belt.

One half of the audience giggles hysterically, the other howls with laughter. In the meantime the film has hurled itself into a quagmire of legalese, during which it emerges that Raghdha, to escape being imprisoned for assault, must marry Zaki.

Amid all these legal hassles no amount of song and dance, no matter how Russian and revealing, and no matter how meaningful the lyrics are supposed to be, can overcome the fact that nothing will save the film but another silo of insinuation and bedroom innuendo. And sure enough, we are bombarded with silo after silo till we cry out for mercy.

The teens, apparently, loved the film, which will no doubt stand *Estakozza* in good stead as it attempts to lure the summer holiday crowds into Alexandria's cinemas. But as far as this writer goes, it put me off shellfish for months.

Music

Aye aye wow wow wee wee

Jazz concert. African rhythm. Cairo Opera House, Open Air Theatre, 14 July

The mid-summer lottery season flows on at the Open Air Theatre of Cairo Opera House. Programmes are scarce, and when available, scary. They never tell. Tonight's concert was no exception. As the concert commenced it sounded more Caribbean than anything else.

Whispering voices suggested it would be an evening of Nigerian music. It was not. So which cap fitted? As the concert commenced it sounded more Caribbean than anything else. Why did you come, asks a small, still voice from within. Do not know. But why not come, why not sample an outdoor, midsummer show? It could have been oasty, but it was not. It was art, a part of Cairo's night art, on the loose, among the stars and lights. It is simple, it always works. This the audience

feels and is consequently indulgent. The carnage of day time is over. Let's try the night time. We don't know why we came but we are staying all the same. We are the audience and the band. The band is six players, with a vocalist who stands dead centre, sways a lot and sings little. The actual singing was mostly done by the six players. Although they made some weirdly flighty, asexual noises, which quite removed the band from any African context.

To begin with the vocalisation was soft, tuneful and slumberous. In later numbers it moved to deep base twanginess, developing what was to remain for the entire show, a slow, voluptuous double bed sort of music with a heave-ho rhythm gathering force into a twist for the

central beat, then down away among the pillows. A friendly listen. Indoors or out everything was big for this night's gamble under the wide sky-scapes. Another number was more brisk — a trotty though there were no night foxes about, oh slink. The inner voice — do you go for this kind of thing? Frankly no. It is horrible, relaxed to extinction. The bumps are padded, the lights are brist, and there are no dreams behind these Cairo volages. The music is round the world cruise stuff without the ship. And everything ended up, as it tends to, in the good old, dependable Caribbean.

The audience is beginning to react. Some jigg, some slither into jitters. Everything is bland and pleasant. A sad ballad, a song with a strong whiff of Mis-

David Blake snuggles up with the elderdown blues

issippi slow motion floats in and catches the audience. The crowd begins to move, arms wave and some in the audience begin to murmur quietly to themselves. The big bass lurches into action and the mood is I just want to dance. The ponderous oceans give way, high falsetto screams are let loose. We are into new territory, that strange area where the alternative Miss World melts into the Chelsea arts ball. Florid and highly coloured. But the squealing falsets suddenly go basso and we are back on the tracks. Not now — not again.

The band begins those old elderdown blues. The tempo and the audience have opted for action, and so the big number of the evening comes up. Not now, no problem. The crowd joins in and it goes on for ever. In the ar-

cades surrounding the Open Air Theatre the dancers are up on their feet. Watching is easier than listening.

From here on the band found its formula and kept to it. The tick-tock all electric bed-warmer is turned up. The band keeps to the rhythm because this is what the audience wants. Aye aye wow wee wee came the long high squeals. It has a fascination, and is certainly a release not to be resisted. Every foot goes into action, arms are up and waving. If you want to join the dance you have to go into the portals around the theatre. Lots of people do. Long summer night shows have brought tolerance to the attendants. No one is forbidden anymore. In fact they are encouraged. What sort of a world cruise is this? Cairo by the Nile, in the humid darks of a July night. One girl, suddenly moved, drags her mother to the edges and majestically they begin a slow, swaying duet. Mothers can and mothers do, it seems. They are both happy.

Listings

The first fully computer generated motion picture.

EXHIBITIONS

Brakhia Abdel-Ghaffar (Paintings) *Atelier du Centre de l'Art, El-Radi, Soling Hall, 11, Kasr El-Doula St, Downtown, Tel 574 6730. Daily exc Fri, 10am-1pm, 6pm-10pm.*

Alaa El-Sherif (Sculptures) & Ali El-Sakhal (Sculptures) *Atelier du Centre de l'Art, El-Radi, Soling Hall, 11, Kasr El-Doula St, Downtown, Tel 574 6730. Daily exc Fri, 10am-1pm, 6pm-10pm.*

Group Show *Mashabiya Gallery, 8 Champollion St, Downtown, Tel 574 4494. Daily exc Fri, 11am-5pm. Show featuring works of artists exhibiting at the gallery in the last six years.*

Georges Selim (Paintings) *Gallery Soling, 36/4 Ahmed Orabi St, Mohandessin, Tel 346 3242. Daily exc Fri, 10am-2.30pm & 5.30pm-9.30pm. Until 23 July.*

Mohamed Shaker (Paintings) & Tarek Zahedy (Sculptures) *Esraa Gallery, 3 El-Nasim St, Zamalek, Tel 340 6293. Daily exc Sun, 10.30am-2pm & 3pm-6pm. Until 27 July.*

Group Show (Paintings & Sculptures) *Esraa Gallery, 1 El-Sharqia St, Downtown, Tel 393 1699. Daily exc Fri & Sat, 9am-1pm. Until 5 August.*

Hellenic Library *Foundation for Hellenic Culture, 6 Alsha El-Taymariya St, Garden City, Tel 355 1871. Daily exc Sat & Sun, 10am-2pm.*

The Museum of Mr and Mrs Mohamed Mahmoud Khalil *1 Kafour El-Ahmed St, Dokki, Tel 336 2976. Daily exc Mon, 10am-6pm. Egypt's largest collection of nineteenth century European art, amassed by the late Mahmoud Khalil, including works by Combe, Van Gogh, Gauguin, Monet and Rodin.*

Egyptian Museum *Tahrir St, Downtown, Tel 575 4319. Daily exc Fri, 8am-5pm; Fri, 8am-11.30pm. Outstanding collection of Pharaonic and Ptolemaic treasures and the controversial mummies' room.*

Coptic Museum *Old Cairo, Tel 362 8766. Daily exc Fri, 9am-4pm; Fri, 9am-11am & 1pm-3pm. Founded in 1910, the museum houses the largest collection of Coptic art and artefacts in the world.*

Islamic Museum *Port Said St, Ahmed Maher St, Bab El-Khalq, Tel 390 9930/390 1520. Daily exc Fri, 9am-4pm; Fri, 9am-11.30pm & 1pm-3pm. A vast collection of Islamic art and crafts including mashrabiya, lustreware, ceramics, textiles, woodwork and coins; drawn from Egypt's Islamic, Ayyubid, and Mamluk periods, and other countries in the Islamic world.*

Museum of Modern Egyptian Art *Opera House Grounds, Gezira, Tel 340 6861. Daily exc Mon, 10am-1pm & 3pm-7pm. A permanent display of paintings and sculpture charting the modern art movement in Egypt from its earliest pioneers to latest practitioners.*

Mohamed Nagui *Museum of Modern Egyptian Art, 9 Mahmoud Al-Ghuni St, Giza. A museum devoted to the paintings of Mohamed Nagui (1888-1956).*

Mahmoud Maktar Me-Fayoum portraits: Egyptian Museum *Tahrir St, Gezira, Daily exc Sun and Mon, 9am-1.30pm. A permanent collection of works by the sculptor Mahmoud Maktar (d. 1924), whose granite monument to Saad Zaghloul stands near Qasr El-Nil Bridge.*

FILMS

Watan Ka Rakhsala *Masara Abdel Kalam, Azad Centre for Indian Culture, 23 Talatat Harb St, Downtown, Tel 393 3396. 18 July, 4pm. Showing Mitun: Shakti.*

Filal Tale *Japanese Cultural Centre, 106 Qasr El-Aini St, Garden City. 11 July, 4pm. Showing Mitun: Shakti.*

Directed by Yoji Yamada this 1986 film follows the career of Koharu, a candy seller turned actress in the early 1930s, at the time of the transition from silent films to talkies.

Commercial cinemas change their programmes every Monday. The information provided is valid through to Sunday unless it is wise to check with the cinema.

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EXHIBITIONS

Brakhia Abdel-Ghaffar (Paintings) *Atelier du Centre de l'Art, El-Radi, Soling Hall, 11, Kasr El-Doula St, Downtown, Tel 574 6730. Daily exc Fri, 10am-1pm, 6pm-10pm.*

Alaa El-Sherif (Sculptures) & Ali El-Sakhal (Sculptures) *Atelier du Centre de l'Art, El-Radi, Soling Hall, 11, Kasr El-Doula St, Downtown, Tel 574 6730. Daily exc Fri, 10am-1pm, 6pm-10pm.*

Group Show *Mashabiya Gallery, 8 Champollion St, Downtown, Tel 574 4494. Daily exc Fri, 11am-5pm. Show featuring works of artists exhibiting at the gallery in the last six years.*

Georges Selim (Paintings) *Gallery Soling, 36/4 Ahmed Orabi St, Mohandessin, Tel 346 3242. Daily exc Fri, 10am-2.30pm & 5.30pm-9.30pm. Until 23 July.*

Mohamed Shaker (Paintings) & Tarek Zahedy (Sculptures) *Esraa Gallery, 3 El-Nasim St, Zamalek, Tel 340 6293. Daily exc Sun, 10.30am-2pm & 3pm-6pm. Until 27 July.*

Group Show (Paintings & Sculptures) *Esraa Gallery, 1 El-Sharqia St, Downtown, Tel 393 1699. Daily exc Fri & Sat, 9am-1pm. Until 5 August.*

Hellenic Library *Foundation for Hellenic Culture, 6 Alsha El-Taymariya St, Garden City, Tel 355 1871. Daily exc Sat & Sun, 10am-2pm.*

The Museum of Mr and Mrs Mohamed Mahmoud Khalil *1 Kafour El-Ahmed St, Dokki, Tel 336 2976. Daily exc Mon, 10am-6pm. Egypt's largest collection of nineteenth century European art, amassed by the late Mahmoud Khalil, including works by Combe, Van Gogh, Gauguin, Monet and Rodin.*

Egyptian Museum *Tahrir St, Downtown, Tel 575 4319. Daily exc Fri, 8am-5pm; Fri, 8am-11.30pm. Outstanding collection of Pharaonic and Ptolemaic treasures and the controversial mummies' room.*

Coptic Museum *Old Cairo, Tel 362 8766. Daily exc Fri, 9am-4pm; Fri, 9am-11am & 1pm-3pm. Founded in 1910, the museum houses the largest collection of Coptic art and artefacts in the world.*

Islamic Museum *Port Said St, Ahmed Maher St, Bab El-Khalq, Tel 390 9930/390 1520. Daily exc Fri, 9am-4pm; Fri, 9am-11.30pm & 1pm-3pm. A vast collection of Islamic art and crafts including mashrabiya, lustreware, ceramics, textiles, woodwork and coins; drawn from Egypt's Islamic, Ayyubid, and Mamluk periods, and other countries in the Islamic world.*

Museum of Modern Egyptian Art *Opera House Grounds, Gezira, Tel 340 6861. Daily exc Mon, 10am-1pm & 3pm-7pm. A permanent display of paintings and sculpture charting the modern art movement in Egypt from its earliest pioneers to latest practitioners.*

Mohamed Nagui *Museum of Modern Egyptian Art, 9 Mahmoud Al-Ghuni St, Giza. A museum devoted to the paintings of Mohamed Nagui (1888-1956).*

Mahmoud Maktar Me-Fayoum portraits: Egyptian Museum *Tahrir St, Gezira, Daily exc Sun and Mon, 9am-1.30pm. A permanent collection of works by the sculptor Mahmoud Maktar (d. 1924), whose granite monument to Saad Zaghloul stands near Qasr El-Nil Bridge.*

FILMS

Watan Ka Rakhsala *Masara Abdel Kalam, Azad Centre for Indian Culture, 23 Talatat Harb St, Downtown, Tel 393 3396. 18 July, 4pm. Showing Mitun: Shakti.*

Filal Tale *Japanese Cultural Centre, 106 Qasr El-Aini St, Garden City. 11 July, 4pm. Showing Mitun: Shakti.*

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The American President *Ramess II, 26th July St, Downtown, Tel 574 7436. Daily 10.30am, 1.30pm, 3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm.*

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Old wine in new bottles

Salah Hassan, in examining the reciprocal flow of influence that has existed between Africa and the West, offers a fresh look at modernism, and even post-modernism, from an African perspective

To this day, the study of African art and its presentation in exhibition has remained largely a Western domain. The scholarship and representation of African art are products of a Western sensibility, an expression of Western aesthetic responses to African visual culture. This should partially explain the disparity between African art in written texts, exhibitions, and museums collections, and African art in reality.

Recent attention by Western institutions to modern African art, and non-Western representation in general, has not, in any profound manner, altered the sense of inferiority with which such institutions view the cultural production of those conveniently labelled as the "other". Nor does such attention represent a drastic change in Western institutional hegemonic strategies which continue to view, with deep distrust, cultural practices generated outside its immediate spheres of influence.

The Western art world has learned to soften and regulate the offensive language and objectifying methodology of its ethnographic and anthropological discourses in relation to African and other non-Western cultures. However, racial determinism, the demand for the display of authenticity and spectacle remain essential to Western criteria of validation and acceptance of African and other non-Western representations. The unusual, the exotic, the naive and the untrained have become of great interest to those art historians, art critics and curators who otherwise would not express any interest in African art, a reminder of the Africa that has always attracted Western explorers, adventurers and thrill seekers, better known as the great white hunters of knowledge, soul and wealth. The outcome has been the deliberate bypassing of the most seasoned and proven African artists in international art fairs, in favour of the naïve, crude, and naive products of the roadside painters, who crowd the markets of every African metropolis, and who have been turned overnight into self-taught geniuses.

Most current scholarship on African art, pioneered by scholars and patrons of Western-trained artists in Africa, has adopted a Manichaean scheme, defining "contemporary" African art as meaning art produced by Western trained individuals, rather than communally-centred, artists. It is also perceived as less subservient to dominant socio-religious structures than "traditional" art forms. In other words, "contemporary" art becomes a category reserved for works of those African artists who are mostly urban based, who produce work according to the norms of Western modern art, and who exhibit in galleries, museums, first class hotels or foreign cultural centres. These artists are, to some extent, internationally known, and their patrons include their governments and related institutions, foreign expatriates, and a largely Western-educated local bourgeoisie. Works produced by this category of artists are classified as elite, fine or high, as opposed to other forms referred to as traditional, tourist, commercial or popular. Considered more intellectual, this fine or high art is contrasted to traditional art as a totally separate entity. In this scheme, traditional art is perceived as consensual, communally-based and created according to rigid and unchanging conventions. Such a dichotomy — problematic, simplistic, and ahistorical — is inadequate for the study of contemporary African art. The traditional versus contemporary dichotomy is created by the colonising structure in Africa, and is rooted in the epistemological base of African art scholarship which is basically Eurocentric. Any serious effort to define contemporary African art forms must start by examining this dichotomy and its validity.

The confusing implications of traditional versus modern or contemporary art can be explored by raising several related questions. How, for example, can we classify "traditional" forms of African art that continue to be produced in Africa? Are they not contemporary art too? The usual dichotomy creates an illusion that forms of African art designated traditional, or studied as such, are artefacts of the past, although, in reality, traditional forms of art continue to be produced today within the burgeoning urban as well as rural sectors of Africa. Another methodological question that arises is how to classify these traditional forms? Is the designation neo-traditional critical enough to distinguish such forms from either the plain traditional or the new art of the educated elites? Still more relevant is the paradoxical realisation that so-called "contemporary" art has, in fact, been in existence for more than a half century; that is to say, since at least the 1920s if we accept the proposition that the genesis of contemporary art forms was associated with the second decade of colonial rule. Is not that sufficient time to label these forms traditional, in the original sense of the word, or enough time to establish a tradition? Or, as some would have it, are traditions more often than not actually invented?

Recently, categories such as international, self-taught, studio-trained, popular, tourist, commercial-oriented and so forth have been proposed to distinguish different types of contemporary African artists. Such classifications cannot withstand rigorous analysis, and prove problematic when tested against the realities of the contemporary art scene in Africa. As new propositions, they represent old wine in new bottles. African art forms are still subjected to a static system of classification and perceived to exist outside history.

In the most recent scholarship, the concept of tradition is no longer viewed in a naturalistic sense, as it had been previously. Many students of culture and society have concluded that tradition is no longer an authentic body of knowledge handed down from one generation to another with only minor alterations due to the malfunctioning of memory or skill. It has been recognised that society does not treat tradition passively. It often creates its own traditions through the selection of certain historical events and heroes and even through invented pasts. Although the past is a powerful authority in culture, human societies selectively add to the past, subtract from it, or mould it in its own image. The notion of tradition should be rooted in social life rather than in time alone, and tradition should not be used simply as a naming of objects, but also and more fundamentally as a naming process. Authenticity is no longer the quest for the basic essence of tradition or traditionality. Accordingly, what makes a certain artefact or cultural item African or non-African is, to a great extent, dependent on how Africans themselves perceive it.

An alternative model for understanding and defining contemporary African art, and, in fact, all other forms of African art, is urgently needed. Within this model, African art forms must be perceived as expressing a more complex African reality. Within this reality, these forms can be seen as existing in one contemporary space and interacting with each other in a dialogic manner. Invoking the Bakhtinian concepts of intertextuality and dialogic principle in relation to the study of literary genre, this dialogic relationship is assumed to exist on temporal as well as spatial and historical levels.

Crucial to this alternative model will be the investigation of the relationship between the artist, his/her art work or product, and the audience or patrons — makers, objects and users or consumers, i.e. the social relations of intellectual production within each art form or tradition. The production of African art should be viewed as a complex process in which artists, audiences or critics communicate and articulate their consciousness, aesthetic values and judgments.

To be sure, the history of modern expression defined by Western standards is relatively short in Africa and differs from one part of the continent to the other. But three factors provide important connections. One is the rise of European and Western patronage and intervention. This was characterised by the establishment of art workshops by European expatriates, mostly colonial administrators, liberal colonial educators or missionaries. A second and related factor, is the establishment of formal art schools and academies, often fashioned on the Western art educational model, which can be traced to the 1940s or later. Third, and most important, is the nationalistic cultural resurgence that swept many newly independent African countries where government patronage and interest in the arts became part of building, in some cases inventing, a national culture and identity. In the 1970s and 1980s, new African art movements and initiatives emerged either in reaction to, or as a rejection of, Western schooling

in art (often offered through workshop and art academies in Africa or acquired by travel to study in the West). The basic quest of these new movements and initiatives has been to establish a more culturally-rooted, self-conscious, and African aesthetic expression. Rejecting the homogenising effect of Western cultural imperialism, especially its neo-primitivising and exoticising tendencies, African artists have repositioned themselves as creators of an autonomous, more global art. The net result has been the creation of new African artists, art movements, art associations and festivals, all attempting to construct new tropes of self-representation. Today, a myriad of Western and traditional African influences have been synthesised and continues to be used within a modern idiom to African art.

The search for a new identity expressed in modern forms has been the common denominator of most contemporary art movements in Africa. It is a goal most African artists trained in the Western tradition have shared. Despite the post-colonial aspirations among non-Western nations and the neo-colonial ambitions of capitalism, which brought new conflicts and challenges to modernism, modernism remains a basic issue of debate for the other. This should not be interpreted as a passive reception of foreign influences by African people, for Africans (like other non-Western people) have for long been questioning as well as resisting such Western domination.

The story of European artists — Braque, Klee, Leger, or Picasso — seeking inspiration from African and other non-Western artistic traditions is well known. Not as much is known of African artists' journeys into Western centres of modernism, journeys that exemplify a construct often designated as counter penetration. Not only have African artists lived or been living in Western centres of artistic production, but they have also been in the forefront of contributors to modernism and even post-modernism. Informed by these artists' own past and present predicaments, their works express differing approaches to modernity, various responses to colonialism and post-colonialism, and persistent resistance to Western hegemony. Moreover, the history of modernism, solely from a Western perspective, tends to exclude from its recognition not only the plurality of cultures, but the objects of "high" culture produced by the other.

The majority of pioneer modern artists in Africa belong to the first or second generation of a Western-educated elite class that emerged in many African countries after the second decade of colonial rule. That group was a minority — even today — due to the limited education made available by the colonialists. Many of these elites lived in colonial or post-colonial capitals and urban centres. Historically, this new class felt its marginal situation, i.e. found itself caught in the middle between the masses of urban and rural workers or farmers whose culture and identity are kept intact, and their own aspiration to a way of life similar to the colonial, foreign ruling class.

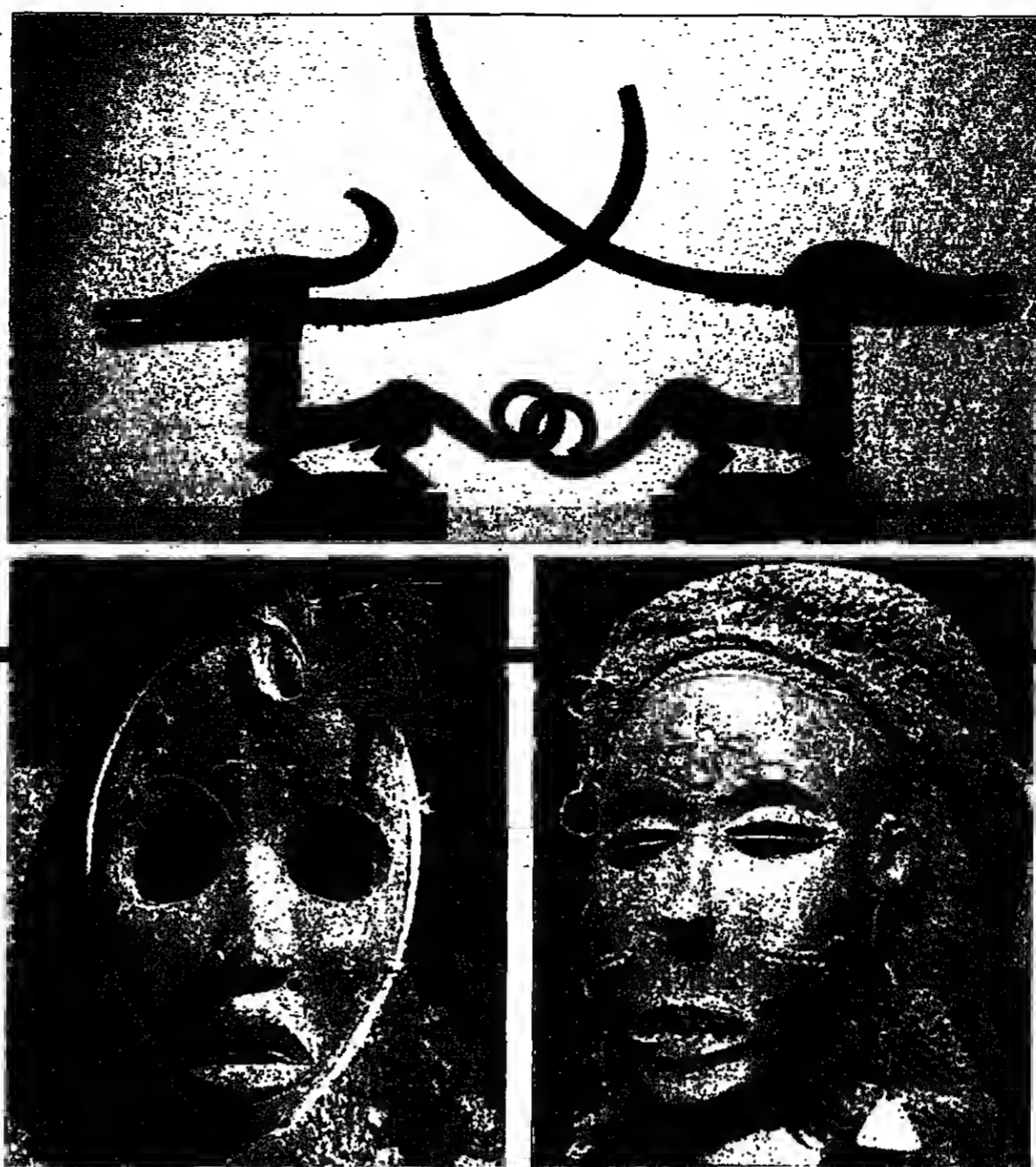
In reaction to this situation, "return-to-the-source" or other native intellectual movements began redefining their (African) identity, though it should be noted that this

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Top, clockwise: Male, left, and female (Tshokwe) masks; a Tshokwe dance; and a wooden Dan mask

Plain Talk

I was deeply upset and chagrined to learn about the death of Margaux Hemingway at the age of 41. And I am sure that the hundreds of Egyptians who crowded the hall during the 1992 Cairo International Film Festival, one day in early December, will feel much the same as I do.

Barely four years ago Margaux Hemingway bewitched that audience by the open and frank manner in which she answered the sometimes pointed questions posed at her press conference.

During her visit I met Margaux several times, and presided over the press conference given by the actress. Her delightful voice has been ringing in my ears ever since I read of her death in the newspapers. And going through the articles churned out almost, it seems, to order, plotting her tragic end, I cannot help but feel that the press has treated this delightful woman unfairly, nay savagely.

The numerous articles concentrated only on failure. They stressed Margaux's struggle with alcoholism, her failure as an actress, the dreadful reviews she received for her first film *Lipstick*, when she was variously described as "bland", "dreadful" and "absolutely awful". Journalists appear to have been fascinated by the downward turn in her career, and on the way she was "bloated and battered" by alcohol.

The picture painted of Margaux Hemingway is not that of the actress I remember. At her Cairo press conference she showed herself well able to deal with the prurient interest of the press. The first question was, unsurprisingly, whether her grandfather's name was behind her success.

She replied succinctly: "Ernest Hemingway I am not. I am absolutely independent. I want to be myself."

She did, however, admit that the fame of her grandfather had come in useful. "His name opened many doors and helped me overcome material problems."

But just like her grandfather, Margaux Hemingway was obsessed by death. Both her maternal and paternal family histories are replete with suicides. But in Cairo she told the assembled reporters that she then no longer feared death. "I look upon the past twelve months as my first meeting with happiness and optimism."

In speaking of the problems she had encountered in her life she retailed, in a frank and open manner, the harrowing story of her failed marriage, her battle with alcohol, and her life long struggle with epilepsy. At one stage she contemplated writing a book about self-healing, a project that was, unfortunately, shelved.

I remember she quoted a line by the American Theodore Roethlis: "I learn by going where I have to go." Her visit to Egypt, she said, represented some kind of therapy. She said that although she knew little of the country she was visiting, she was determined to come to terms with its ancient heritage. "There is no doubt," she said, "that I came searching for adventure. I believe that any new place is a place for adventure. Such adventure does not imply danger, but rather a more positive experience than the simple fear of the unknown."

Margaux Hemingway appeared to me a most spirited creature. How I laughed when she recounted the tale of her meeting with Francois Sagan. The French writer, apparently, had the audacity to suggest that her grandfather was a third-rate author, whereupon Margaux knocked her to the floor. Prostrate, Sagan retracted her opinion, chuckled Margaux.

Mursi Saad El-Din

Fanaticism remains "our common enemy"

Hala Halim reports on an address, given by the Nigerian Nobel Laureate Wole Soyinka, on the continued erosion of freedom of expression and its causes

"Curiously enough," remarked Nigerian playwright and poet Wole Soyinka, "I shall be speaking so much about the problem of freedom of expression in my own country." The Nobel Laureate's introduction was enough to raise one or two eyebrows in the packed lecture-room of the National Museum in Copenhagen, especially since the session on freedom of expression, at which Soyinka was speaking, was billed as part of the "Global Dialogue 96" programme of the Images of Africa festival (14 June-6 July), the focus of which was the execution last November of Ken Saro-Wiwa, the Nigerian journalist who had drawn international attention to the fate of the Ogoni people as they faced appalling environmental degradation caused by the activities of the international oil giant Shell.

Instead, Soyinka continued, he would tackle this vexed question — which really should never be in question — from a slightly different dimension... [examining] the phenomenon over the past decade to a decade and a half... In a tone that moved between the conversational and the declamatory, Soyinka proceeded to address the issue of freedom of expression across geographical, religious and ideological borders, highlighting his talk with personal

anecdotes, digressions and asides. His decision to see the Nigerian situation aside, he explained, was prompted not only by the fact that other speakers in the session would turn their attention to "the specific instances of freedom of expression under dictatorships", but because of his belief that "it seems increasingly easier to counter restrictions on freedom of expression when such restrictions are mounted by the state... than when they are amorphous, faceless, and sometimes even directionless." Unfortunately, he noted, the latter form of antagonism towards freedom of expression "take on a far more lethal direction."

He cited the example of the underground press in Nigeria as a case in point. It had proved so successful at combating government restrictions that the government retaliated by producing imitation underground newspapers directed against the opposition. "Unfortunately," he confided to his audience in one of many engaging asides, "we writers tend to have a sense of humour." So to find a state actually... running an underground press is for me a really beautiful act of poetic justice."

But there is, warned Soyinka, a far more desperate kind of censorship, [the] terminal kind of censorship, which... is arbitrary and

totally out of control." Here Soyinka cited the example of Algeria. In the Algerian paradigm, Soyinka commented, "journalists... [are] considered first line enemies because they possess... an armoury of unholy words in which to extract and to rephrase, for the purposes of demystification, passages from scriptures that contest the divine doctrine of female subservience and male domination... passages in general that challenge the sole authority of any single interpreter of the divine word."

From the Algerian situation Soyinka traced parallel instances of censorship in other religions and other cultures. "Amphitiously, the prelate aims for bigger prey... so this executioner of the divine who punishes identifies the handwork of other unholiness scribbles, proceeds to strike down a Nigub Mahfouz... issues a fatwa against a Taslima Nazreen... and from Taslima it is only one short step... to Yitzhak Rabin." Rabin, Soyinka stressed, was deemed to have "transgressed against the holy writ — another holy writ which declared seven portions of the earth irreversibly the land of the Jews."

Analysing the cause of the power attributed to "holy scriptures" Soyinka briefly drew attention to the far more lenient approach to religious practices in oral cultures. While, he admitted, in oral cultures "an error in the order of recital [may]... require... some rites of cleansing or appeasement to ward off the calamity... I don't know [any] example in oral culture which prescribes a mandatory capital punishment for a real or imagined crime against a divine text." Was there, then, some intrinsic "unsuspected lethal property of the written word?" Certainly the word as the "magic amulet of a terrestrially-ambitious priesthood" was worthy, he suggested, of another exposé.

Referring to a talk he gave at a Paris meeting of Nobel laureates in 1987, Soyinka recalled that he had drawn attention "to the signs of a new authoritarianism of a fanatic brand that appeared to have snuffed a vacuum in the collapse of communism and was rushing to proclaim itself heir to [communism's] strain of violent domination in localised and global interaction." These comments, he noted, were made just a few months after the first fatwa was issued against Salman Rushdie.

And "since that precedent, a rash of mimic competitors, no less deadly in intent, has erupted all over the globe to serve terminal notice on all, of whatever religion or ideological persuasion, who insist on ex-

ercising the faculties of intellect, imagination, exploration and lifestyle in the most meaningful direction." And once again Soyinka brought out the global, cross-religious manifestations of fanaticism by referring to an Israeli Jewish sect which "affirmed the righteousness of the fatwa on Salman Rushdie." He also drew attention to the many Islamic scholars who condemned the fatwa.

While acknowledging that "certain social conditions provide ideal breeding grounds for more susceptible" people, "especially when the indoctrinating process can be linked to real or imagined social or historical injustices," Soyinka continues to believe that the "fanatic, intolerant mind... must be addressed as a self-inflicted, self-reproducing phenomenon."

The Nigerian Laureate then proceeded, through the example of the Salman Rushdie case, to trace a possibly more pernicious form of censorship — that which prevails among the intelligentsia and in academia, and which goes by the name of political correctness. He called for a probing of "the flabby tissues of [the] new language of accommodation" — political correctness — which he described as the "hand-maiden to the territorial expansionism of our terminal censors." In dem-

onstrating the insidious dangers of political correctness, Soyinka cited the reactions to a lecture he gave at the University of Toronto two years ago. Categorically condemning the fatwa against Salman Rushdie, Soyinka referred to then recent articles he had read announcing that "an institute for Islamic studies had increased the blood-money on Salman Rushdie's head by about a quarter of a million dollars."

Soyinka had "made an offer to the institute that if a fraction of that sum were set aside for a group of writers [he] would guarantee to assemble a team which would produce the most sublime exegesis on the life of the Prophet Muhammad to put to shame Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses*."

Later, he said, he "was shocked" to find himself congratulated by members of the faculty on his "courage", a reaction which was explained to him in terms of it now being "politically incorrect to support Salman Rushdie's cause because [Rushdie] had been culturally insensitive." Reasserting that fanaticism remains "our common enemy" under different guises, Soyinka admonished that "the guilt-ridden euphemism and effete phrase-mongering of so-called political correctness... must be abandoned in favour of unambiguous terms of condemnation."



Cairo evenings are often spent on the Corniche, bathed with lights from the five star hotels. Here the entertainment is more modest, but the sight of the Nile makes amply up for the lack of sophistication; the food and drinks are also simple as the vendors of peanuts and lupin, grilled-on-the-spot ears of corn and liquorice juice, do a brisk business running from customer to customer peddling their ware. Sometimes a new bride and her groom stop looking for a strategic spot in which to immortalise the day with the traditional snapshot

Facing challenges

Ahmed Badawi witnesses a generational response to an historic question

The First Training and Awareness Conference, hosted by the American University in Cairo (AUC) from 3 to 6 July, is one of the rare events to have been fully conceptualised, designed and implemented by young people, who were also in charge of the fund-raising effort. With the exception of Nassif Hitti, academic supervisor of the conference, scholar Abdel-Wahab Elmesseri, sociologist Ahmed Abdallah, economist Mahmoud M'ahieddin, and all the other 80 participants, 30 organisers and 20 workshop facilitators were under 28.

The conference was organised by the Arab Youth Forum (AYF), founded in mid-1994 as a non-profit, non-governmental organisation (NGO) concerned with the process of socio-economic development in the Arab world and the potential contribution of youth to this process. Twenty-one year old Soha Radwan, president of the conference and of AYF-AUC, commenting on its title, explains: "By training, we mean skills that youth will need to employ in order to become active participants in the process of socio-economic development. As for awareness, we mean the provision of information, analysis and perspectives by which young people can understand the past, the present and the future of the Arab world."

As mentioned in an AYF document, the Forum "exemplifies a young effort exerted by its founders to crystallise a vision for the Arab nation's future, and to find the formula by which this nation could face up to the civilizational challenge it confronts at present." The founders, a Moroccan, a Sudanese and five Egyptian students, aged between 19 and 25, had met in 1992 during the second Model Arab League conference. In the same year they participated in forming the Arab Youth Association at AUC. The association, how-

ever, was short-lived and with its demise AYF came into being.

The idea of the conference started in 1992, when the Arab Youth Association organised a similar event under the same title. That conference, however, was only limited to AUC students and was conducted in English. With the establishment of the AYF, a new concept was very much on the agenda. It took two years, though, for it to see the light.

"Traditional funding channels were blocked to us, understandably," says Radwan. "We were a bunch of kids with no track record of success. Also, traditional funding channels (through the international donor community) require a lot of negotiations and take a very long time. Therefore, we had to shift to local sources of funding."

It was not easy, and by mid-1995 the group of young volunteers could not even sustain their headquarters. Then somebody had the idea of establishing a chapter at AUC, something that conformed with a major AYF objective of expanding into all the universities and major cities of the Arab world. "We couldn't get registered as a chapter at AUC, but we were registered as a club, which has been good enough. At least that gave us some backing," says Radwan.

Last April, preparations for the conference started in earnest. By the time the project was designed, the fund-raising committee had less than a month to come up with LE20,000. Mohamed Amin, who just turned 20, took charge: "I basically squeezed everything I could get from AUC. Then I contacted 50 private businesses, managed to follow up on 30, and eventually two agreed to help. All my objectives had been met, though, and on time."

The training component of the conference was delivered through three parallel workshops, each divided into nine sessions, cov-

ering public relations and projects and leadership skills. The workshops were crisscrossed by three plenaries. The first was on Arab identity and culture, delivered by Abdel-Wahab Elmesseri, a prominent Egyptian intellectual. Elmesseri emphasised the need to develop a practical Arab model for the future, because "the Western model is impossible due to cultural, economic and, above all, environmental reasons."

The second lecture, on the participation of youth in development, was delivered by sociologist Ahmed Abdallah, who attempted to define the three key terms: youth, Arab identity and development. The third lecture posed the question: A new Middle East or Arab integration? Economist Mahmoud Mohieddin basically tore the notion of Middle-Easternism apart.

The titles of the lectures, the speakers and the philosophical background of the organisation behind the conference very strongly indicated the overall attitude of the event: the need for genuine change, on a regional level, especially in the way youth are trained to become active participants in the development process. As Radwan explains, it is essential to combine training and awareness because if you only have the former you become one of two things: "either a mercenary who works for absolutely anything, or a professional capitalist who cares for nothing but his business."

"The 21st century individual will have to be a well-rounded person," says Ashraf Gad, 27, a professional facilitator who volunteered to lead a session on project planning and management. "That individual will have to be computer-literate, to know something about management, something about finance, politics, human behaviour and a host of other things. And this will have to take place with-

in a specific indigenous context. You know your Arab identity and culture and that feeds back to your management or PR principles."

Radwan comments: "What we at AYF feel is that, right now, the map of the world and of the region is being reformulated. Therefore, we as young people plan to inject new blood into this process, relying on our ability to generate new ideas, not necessarily copies of the old Arab nationalism, or of the idea of the Arab Umma. There are many ideas that could be formulated once young people acquire the knowledge and start thinking critically and stop taking things like Arab nationalism and identity for granted. And then the collective view of Arab youth will formulate a better vision for the Arab world, a better future."

Similar views were expressed by the participants, who came from the universities of Cairo, Ain Shams, Alexandria, Zagazig and the Naval Academy. There were also participants from several NGOs and independent young professionals. Even though they were divided along the same arguments dividing the majority of Arabs, their articulations had a different feel to them.

An optimistic tone was prevalent, and it did not seem to be just the enthusiasm of youth.

Amr El-Aguiz, who joined AYF just before the conference, remarked: "[Many people] view others as super-powers, forgetting that we, as Arabs, are also a super-power, or at least have what it takes to be one."

Could this conference mark the initiation of a "generational response to the historic question of the Arab nation?" as phrased by an AYF founder and former member, currently awaiting his first assignment as a diplomat. These young adults have the knowledge, the skills, the determination and, most important of all, an agenda.

Sufra Dayma

Sfeeha filling (II)

Ingredients:
1/2 kilo finely minced meat
4 large onions (finely chopped)
5 ripe red tomatoes
1 carton yoghurt
2 tsp. *tehina*
2 tsp. vinegar
1/2 cup pine nuts
Butter
Salt + pepper + allspice + cinnamon

Method:
Fry the onions in butter then add the meat and stir for a couple of minutes, add the spices and leave over low heat. In the meantime, skin the tomatoes and finely chop them, add them to the *tehina*, the vinegar and the yoghurt. Blend them all well then add them to the meat. Cover and simmer until the liquid is dried, (you may need to uncover the pan towards the end). Leave the filling aside to cool. Prepare your oven trays and brush them slightly with oil. Pat round each ball of dough half a centimeter thick and fill each patty in the middle with two tablespoonsful of the meat filling and decorate with some pine nuts. When you are through with the whole quantity, leave them to rest for 15 minutes, during which the oven should be preheated at 450°F. Place the trays inside the oven for 15 minutes or only when the *sfeehas* turn slightly golden.

Moushira Abdel-Malek

Restaurant review

Nouvelle quiche

Nigel Ryan snacks on sandwiches and other things

The summer is well and truly upon us, and with it the silly season. And what could be sillier than a sandwich? They are so practical, so very snatched lunch, and yet to find a proper sandwich in Cairo is as hard as locating a decent bouillabaisse.

Where to look? I am no sleuth and have always found detective novels faintly annoying, but it seems obvious, even to me, that one might as well start with a decent bakery. It is bread, after all, and not what you put between it, that makes or breaks a sandwich. So off I traipsed to the Marriott hotel, where there is a bakery which often has rather nice bread.

How is it possible to take a sandwich seriously? They are so redolent of children's tea parties, of grumpy parents insisting you eat the crusts, or else of those semi-formal occasions catered on the cheap. Yet when you are paying ten pounds or more for your own sandwich the time has come, I think, to take it all a little more seriously than one might, initially, be inclined. Separate that bread and examine the contents. It is an action that the third Earl of Sandwich — inventor of the thing in hand — might not have considered, but then he had the revenues of one of the Cinque Ports to play with at the gaming tables, and in any case, having given your name to something it often does not do to examine that thing too closely. But times have changed and the 18th century earl, parsimonious in most things apart from his wagers may well, given the ravages of inflation and the sifting up of his port, be more inclined to ensure that

he was getting value for money.

At The Bakery in the Marriott the day's sandwiches are chalked up on a blackboard, together with other hits and pieces. There is cheese cake, and peach pie, and varieties of quiche. I decided on a small tongue sandwich supplemented by a slice of spinach quiche, my lunch time companion a smoked veal sandwich and the searingly uninspiring named cheese quiche. We sat at a small circular table made from pastel pink reconstituted granite and waited.

Before long the orders appeared. The quiche had a moment in the microwave, and was warm. We were asked when ordering whether we wanted small or large slices, and had chosen small only to find that small was ample. The cheese quiche turned out to be cheese and mushroom, spinach just spinach. If the latter had a slightly soggy crust, this represents no real complaint. Both were surprisingly good, though only the spinach was fresh. The mushrooms were no strangers — this I would wager with even the extravagant earl — to the inside of a can. Then the sandwiches. They may be described as small, but they are hardly diminutive. Excellent baguettes, generously filled. The smoked veal was fine, the tongue a trifle bland. Both contained tomatoes and vinegary mustard and came with a garnish of *torshi*.

With two soft drinks the bill came to LE40. Hardly a snip, but then a decent sandwich does not come cheap.

The Bakery, Marriott Hotel, Zamalek.

Al-Ahram Weekly

Crossword

By Samia Abdennour

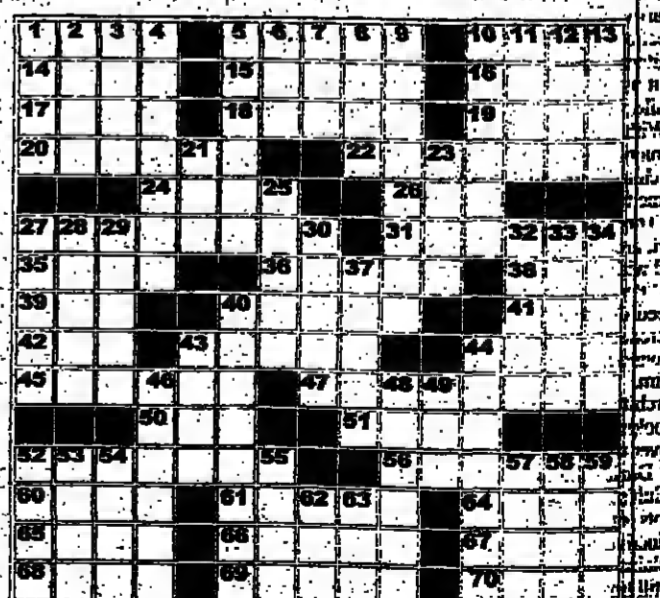
ACROSS

1. Spawn of oyster (4)
5. Loud resonant metallic sound (5)
10. Thick slide of rib meat (4)
14. Bewitch (4)
15. Landing place (5)
16. Animal's burrow, small dingy abode (4)
17. Impersonates (4)
18. Ancient Greek music ball (5)
19. So be it (4)
20. Resinous matter used in food and varnish making (5)
22. Closest to (7)
24. Suffer pain (4)
26. Falsify (3)
27. Afghan sheepskin great-coats (8)
31. Breakfast dish (6)
35. Musical instrument (4)
36. Ankle-bone (5)
38. Consumed (3)
39. B. Ghali is its sec. (3)
40. Diva's forte, pl. (5)
41. Definite article (3)
42. Med. Corps. Rep. (3)
43. Vogue; swing towards (5)
44. Unit of loudness (4)
45. Kitchen gadget (6)
47. Without flowering plan's reproduction unit (8)
50. In the manner of, 2 wds (3)
51. Castrate (4)
52. Cul-de-sac (7)
56. Within (6)
60. Barren (4)
62. Pertaining to the unit of heredity in chromosome (5)
64. Comb. form for "oil" (4)
65. Of great extent (4)
66. Cyster (5)
67. S-shaped (4)
68. Never poetic (4)
69. Part of calyx (5)
70. Fathers (4)

DOWN

1. Bridge feat (4)
2. A stage in insect development (4)
3. God of War (4)
4. Person who has left a valid will at death (7)
5. Bell-shaped (6)
6. Preceded (3)
7. Hail (3)
8. Inert gas (4)
9. Benevolent (8)
10. Tax price (6)
11. Domicile (4)
12. Spanish cheese (4)

Last week's solution



13. Closely confined (4)
21. Glaciate (3)
22. Focuses (4)
25. Arous (5)
27. Bottom (5)
28. Unit of weight (5)
29. Snow away (5)
30. Makes signs of the cross (5)
32. Machine for shaping ivory, wood and metal (5)
33. Lore (5)
34. 13-19 years (5)
37. Puts cargo on board (5)
40. Tiddies (8)
43. Comb. form for "far" (4)
44. Strong thin board made by gluing layers with the grains (4)
46. Part of fireman's equipment (6)
48. Pertaining to a type of poetry (8)
49. Holder of degree of proficiency in judo (3)
52. Cock-crow; inception (4)
53. A US lake (4)
54. Coadjutor (4)
55. Low sand-hill by the sea (4)
57. Type of seaweed (4)
58. Vibrating part of musical instrument (4)
59. Female of fallow deer, pl. (4)
62. Pen, jumbled (3)
63. Int. Med. Ass. (3)



Rites of passage

While the British attempted to colonise Egypt with military might, the French went about the same task in a more subtle way: theirs was a "mission civilisatrice" aimed at driving home, permanently, the assumption of their intellectual superiority over lesser peoples, who were expected to blindly follow the path they had expertly designed. Many who had already imbibed respectful draughts at the French fountains of wisdom and knowledge led their children to the same source, namely the French institutes of learning, scattered around the country and masterfully administered by a staff trained thoroughly in the task of educating the natives. Their discipline was strict, to say the least, and all-encompassing, reaching far into their students' entire lives. Unlike the British schools, where vulgar eating was a favoured punishment, the French used the threat of banishment from their paradise — resulting in everlasting failure — as a method of control, enforced by parents who believed they could not survive the embarrassment of their progeny's dismissal from a French institution.

We, as students, approached our educators with nothing less than awe. We eagerly chanted "our ancestors, the Gauls" and fantasised about the day when, armed with the coveted Baccalaureate, we would finally be admitted to the temple of supreme enlightenment, a French university. Nothing was going to stand in the way of this event, the culmination of years of obedience and hard work. From secondary school onward we studied through the nights, sat for an infinite number of "mock Baccalaureates" to prepare ourselves for the ultimate event, which alone would determine our entire future, and generally abided by the school rules, no matter how arbitrary. The Baccalaureate was much more than a certificate of proficiency; it was concrete proof that, from the chrysalides, after proper minimisation, bright French butterflies had finally emerged. Such a process was not to be taken lightly, and to obtain this consecration, thorough examination of all aspects of our personalities, including our moral fortitude, was required.

Any infringement of the examination's rules entailed immediate expulsion from the whole system and the prospects of a ruined future. Few dared to contemplate such consequences.

As a student of one of the French Lycées, I showed the right disposition. I was eager to become a living example of their educational success. I lived in fear of failing my teachers. I approached the Baccalaureate with what they described as a "healthy" terror, encouraged nevertheless by the teachers' appreciation of my constant efforts. I was, they told my parents, "a promising candidate."

On the eve of the fated day, I was fed fish, as advised, to stimulate my grey cells, and given a mild tranquiliser. Early the next morning, my mother drove me to the Bab El-Long Lycée, the only one with an examination hall large enough to accommodate the candidates who came from all over Egypt. The Baccalaureate was a state examination, organised and supervised entirely by the French authorities. It was surrounded with the proper pomp and circumstance.

I took my place according to the alphabetical arrangement of rows which were forming in the school courtyard as the mounted police positioned themselves at all entrances and exits. Cheating was a permanent offence. Every humanly possible precaution was taken to prevent us from succumbing to the temptation of such a heinous crime.

As the roll call proceeded, my vision blurred and my ears buzzed. With a swimming head, I heard what vaguely sounded like my name and pushed my feet forward, forcing them to enter the examination hall. Having forgotten the order of the letters in the alphabet, I wandered miserably between the neatly lined desks.

"Hey," said a voice across the aisle, "aren't you the math whiz?" The voice belonged to a boy, a member of a species I had practically never encountered. Furthermore, he was wearing a pink shirt, a colour that was downright revolutionary for a man's garment in those days. The boy was leading me to my place. "When you finish, show me the answers," he whispered. I was dumbfounded. He wanted me to commit a crime, to bring eternal shame on my school and my family. Besides, we had been told repeatedly that all those who had tried such reckless behaviour had been caught and duly punished, branded with the smearing letters of failure.

I looked around: there were dozens of supervisors, one for each four desks, others scattered randomly about, scanning the hall from every vantage point. The boy was mad, I decided; no one could beat the system, an impression further confirmed by the distribution of coloured scrap paper according to a system so ingeniously devised that no two adjacent candidates had the same colour. Mine was pink. I considered it a favourable omen. Superstition was rampant in my family, notwithstanding Descartes.

As few minutes before eight o'clock, the French Embassy representative walked in, holding the sealed envelope which had arrived from France by diplomatic pouch. As the clock struck eight, he broke the seal. The questions were distributed together with booklets, bearing our secret numbers, on which our final results had to be clearly marked. I looked at the questions. Suddenly I was no longer scared. I had solved all the problems a couple of minutes before the official from the embassy stopped the clock. I looked around. The boy's desk was a few rows behind me, across the aisle. There was pure panic in his eyes. The supervisor was hovering over me, waiting to pounce on and seize all the papers at the signal. "I finished," I suddenly yelled at the top of my voice, banging on the desk. "Take me to the bathroom immediately or I'll make a puddle." I shrieked, sweeping all the pink sheets from the desk and brandishing my booklet under the nose of the supervisor, who was momentarily taken aback. The other supervisors gathered around in consultation. There had obviously been no precedent for such behaviour. In the absence of precise guidelines, they decided to put it down to an attack of nerves, although they were more accustomed to fainting spells. Eventually a woman was called to escort me out, with strict instructions not to allow me to re-enter the examination hall. I did not need to. I had seen the boy scrambling to his feet to help one of the supervisors collect the pink sheets — with all the answers — scattered all over the floor.

He obviously managed to make good use of them, because, two weeks later, I read his name in the paper among those who had passed the dreaded Baccalaureate. From that day on, my blind admiration for "our ancestors the Gauls" began to wane.

Fayza Hassan

Aesthetic incongruities cloud modern Cairo's horizon. Al-Ahram Weekly searches the streets for harmony and tranquility

A whale of a building

Not everyone wants to live in a high-rise. Sahar El-Bahr reviews a new law intended to wipe out the free rein of the "building whales"

Almost everyone in Nasr City knows Fawzi El-Sayed. The businessman and construction company owner is the biggest landlord in town. El-Sayed owns the government-owned LE100 million in fines and has been charged with bribery and forgery. He owns 85 buildings in Nasr City alone which are in direct violation of construction codes.

Scores of El-Sayed's have been haphazardly building in modern Cairo for two decades. Their collective disregard for the law is common knowledge. In colloquial Arabic, they are known as whales (*hawal*) and the media often portrays them as wealthy, corrupt criminals.

Maj-Gen Ahmed Suleiman, Nasr City district head, admits that construction violations are common and those who stick to the law are the exception. The reason, he says, is that the old legislation — known as Law No 106 of 1976 — was full of loopholes and implementation was lax.

A new construction law just passed by parliament will, among other things, ease restrictions for construction companies. The aim is to give builders more leeway in order to prevent them from side-stepping the law. The new legislation — named Law No 268 of 1996 — will make it easier for builders to get a licence, allow slightly higher building heights, cut a great deal of red tape and increase property owners' profit margins.

Five years ago, Mohamed El-Adly, owner of a private import-export company decided to move to Abbas Al-Aqqad street in Nasr City. He paid LE150,000 for a 120-square-metre flat. El-Adly's landlord promised to build a garage in the building's basement. Instead, he turned it into a restaurant — a common violation of the law which states that residential buildings must provide garages in their basements. "There is absolutely nowhere to park except on the pavement," El-Adly complained.

Building owners complain that the high prices of land and the restrictions on building height forced them to try and make every inch of their property profitable.

Ahmed El-Abd, owner of El-Barma construction company, believes the shortage of land available for construction is also a big part of the problem. "It is forbidden to build on state-owned or agricultural land. It is also forbidden to build extra floors. These unreasonable restrictions encouraged property owners to violate the law, but these violations only point to defects in the old law."

Law 106 restricted building height to 1.25 times the width of the street on which it is built. The new construction code stipulates that the height of new buildings should not exceed 1.5 times the width of the street. Allowing higher buildings, within reason, would increase property owners' profit margin.

The new law also cracks down on corruption which has turned areas like Nasr City into an array of sky-scrapers.

Igal Hosni, a resident in the seventh district at Nasr City, pointed out that the building in front of her's suddenly grew to 20 floors — three times higher than the law allows. In just two weeks, she watched seven floors being built.

When Hosni and her neighbours saw the sixth floor going up, they filed an official complaint. "The officials were very nice and they kept promising us that they will take the necessary measures. Of course, nothing has been done," she said with disgust.

Mamdouh El-Wali writes in *The Inhabitants of Slums and Shantytowns* that before World War II, there was enough affordable housing for Egyptians from all classes. After the war, rents were officially frozen. Since then, they have increased three times — in 1952, 1958 and finally in 1961. In the 1960s, construction com-

panies and some buildings were nationalised, prompting the government to build subsidised housing.

The housing crisis began in the '80s when the government abandoned building housing for lower income families and allowed condominiums and up-scale flats to flourish, according to El-Wali.

As large amounts of money began to pass hands, corruption mushroomed and by the '90s, a tremendous number of violations were registered with the Technical Supervision Agency of the Ministry of Housing. At the beginning of the decade, 80 per cent of the buildings in Egypt were in violation of construction codes. Recent estimates show that 96 per cent of the buildings in Nasr City violated the law.

"The situation in Nasr City is strange and abnormal," said Milad Hanna, professor of structural engineering at Ain Shams University and a veteran housing expert. "It is beyond the control of the district head and Nasr City Construction Company which sold the land and then let the buyers do whatever they wanted."

A general atmosphere of corruption, according to Hanna, encourages builders to ignore the law. "Everything is subject to exceptions for the sake of those with influence who consider themselves above the law," said Hanna.

The new law stipulates that only the prime minister has the power to make exceptions, such as in cases where the area has special architectural considerations.

According to Hanna, Nasr City was intended to resemble Helipolis, which was built at the beginning of the century by a Bel-

gian company. But in Nasr City, the main construction company is a public sector one. Law 106 did not require the government to get a building licence. The new code does.

In fact, the new legislation makes it easier for everyone to get a building licence — another measure intended to discourage corrupt practices. It lowers license fees to a maximum of LE400. Under the old legislation, a license cost 27 per cent of the total cost of construction which could amount to millions. And licences under the new code will be issued within one month so that eager builders do not grow impatient and resort to illegal means such as bribery to speed up the process.

Further loopholes in the 1976 legislation became evident once officials tried to implement court orders to eliminate offences. If a builder was found guilty, he would often push for the courts to order his building be removed, knowing that this would be impossible since the building was already occupied. The law did not allow officials to evict residents.

Worse, defendants were undeterred from repeating their crimes since they were confident no one would follow up the court order.

Part of the problem in implementation, says Suleiman, has been the lack of money, equipment and time. The time factor is especially crucial since buildings seem to go up overnight, leaving little time for officials to make the necessary rounds.

Suleiman suggests a useful amendment to existing legislation would be to confiscate the equipment of the guilty party. If work resumes, the owner and contractor should then be arrested.

The police should tighten up. A specialised company should implement the court order to abolish constructions in violation of the law. Another solution would be to cut off public utilities," Suleiman concluded, referring to water and power supplies.

Yehia Shiddi, engineering professor at Al-Azhar University, points out that the infrastructure of most buildings are designed to fit a limited number of floors. He indicated that the height of the buildings should be related to the condition of the services and utilities and the amount of parking available.

Shiddi lamented the fact that Hadayeq El-Qobba district near Helipolis, once full of palaces and villas, is now crammed with huge buildings each housing 12 floors.

Elements of style

Egyptian and Islamic architecture are making a comeback, writes Dina Ezzat

Mashrabiyas and domes are becoming a fashionable feature of modern buildings. An eclectic style of architecture that combines the basic decorative and structural elements of Islamic and traditional Egyptian architecture is fast becoming the rave for urban buildings and summer resorts alike.

Experts hope that the synthesis of modernity and tradition may remedy Cairo's haphazard urban landscape.

"People are breaking away from the ugly match-box-like buildings that have been mushrooming over the last two decades," said designer Hisham Fawzi.

The trend to re-introduce Islamic and traditional Egyptian architectural styles began in the mid-1980s when a new Dar Al-Ifta' (bureau of religious rulings) was built in the area of El-Dokki, not far from the historic district of old Mameluke-Ottoman Cairo.

The three-floor building with its *mashrabiyas*, large engraved wooden doors and traditional lamps, was applauded for its stylish incorporation of Islamic architecture. "And it was repeatedly copied," commented Hisham Fawzi, an expert on Mameluke architecture.

Around the same time, world-renowned Egyptian architect Hassan Fathy's death triggered a "trend to build in the traditional Egyptian fashion," according to Nadim. This meant simpler architectural lines, shorter buildings, and lots of domes.

However, it was mainly the availability of capital that encouraged people to move away from aluminium windows to *mashrabiyas*.

"The spread of ugly buildings throughout the last two to three decades is not uniquely or primarily a reflection of bad taste. It is also the reflection of poor economic conditions," said architect-designer Ayman El-Qasbi.

It is obviously much more economical to build with no concern for style, he explained. "With the constant talk about amending construction laws, real-estate contractors pressure architects to quickly finish their buildings in order to sell them," El-Qasbi added.

Throughout history the rise of the value of art, architecture included, was closely associated with economic prosperity.

"People who do not have enough money to feed their children are unlikely to feel the difference between a Soviet-style housing compound and an Islamic-style house," said Nadim. "To expect those people to worry about architectural values is unrealistic. They are not looking for style; they are looking for a roof over their heads," she added.

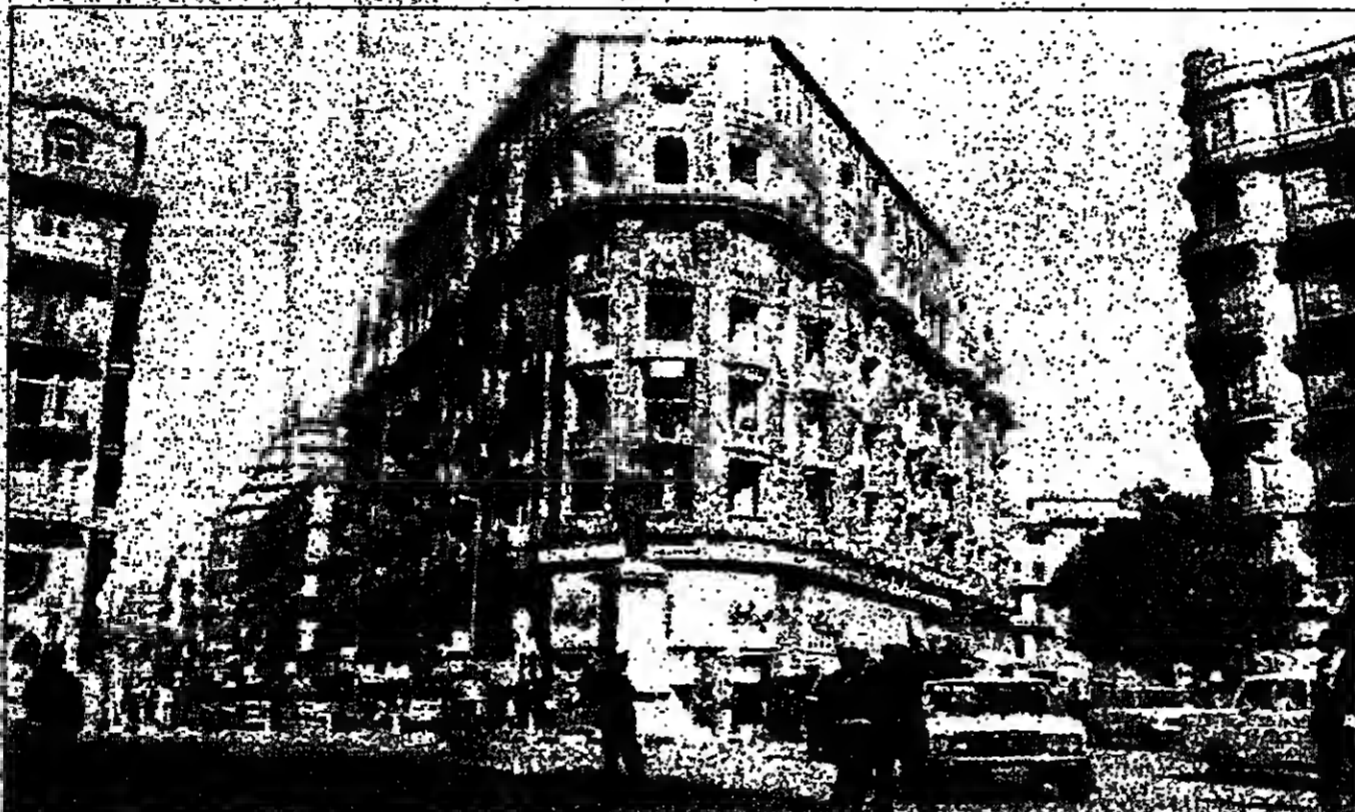
During the mid-1980s, Egyptians working in Gulf states began coming back home. "They had lots of savings and wanted to invest in distinctive houses," explained Fawzi. "That explains why the return of Islamic architecture is still limited; it is exclusive to those who have the money. You see it in the nice neighbourhoods and summer resorts of the rich," he added.

The return of Islamic and traditional architecture had more to do with the decorative rather than the structural aspect of architecture. "The structural aspects are very difficult to revive," said Nadim. The difficulties are primarily related to space.

"Sticking to the authentic structural designs of Islamic and traditional buildings requires a lot of space to build on and huge budgets to spend. This is why the structural aspect is more obvious in summer resorts," noted Fawzi.

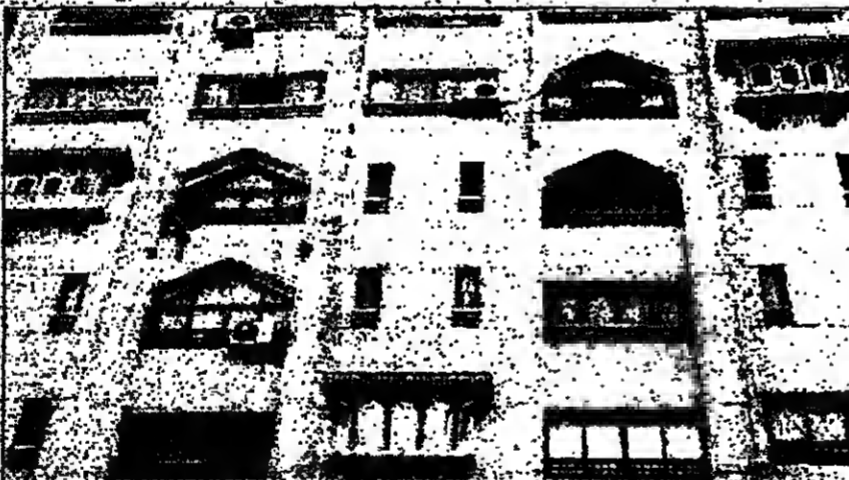
Today, the decorative element is a simplified version of more traditional Islamic architecture. "Today's *mashrabiyas* are in much simpler designs than the ones you find in, say, Beit El-Sheimi (located in Islamic Cairo). There is nothing on the facades, but it is limited to the main gates and does not come in the complex fashion that you would find on the walls of the palaces of Old Cairo," said Nadim.

The simplified decor has much to do with the limitations of today's artisans, budget constraints and contemporary taste. "Had we not simplified and in some cases even simplified the lines of Islamic and traditional architecture, we still would have been stuck with



Rich in heritage and pleasing to the eye

photo: Randa Shaath



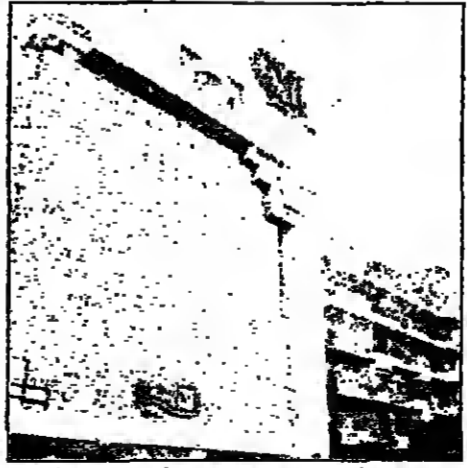
The synthesis of modernity and tradition (left), Dar Al-Miz' (right)



photos: Jihan Ammar



Too close for comfort (left), match-box buildings crowd Abbas El-Aqqad street (right)



Uglier and uglier. Modern buildings are increasingly overshadowing the harmony of Cairo's landscape

March of the ugly

Modern Cairo suffers from a malaise of ugly buildings writes Jasmine Maklad

As you wade through the hordes of shoppers in the Roxy and Korba areas of Helipolis, time and space are blurred. The glamorous shops of these bustling streets seem to belong in a modern shopping centre or mall. Instead, they are housed to buildings which are the remains of architecture from the early 1900s — an age where culture, beauty and art came together.

At one time, this area of Helipolis was the perfect example of architecture which was in harmony with its surroundings; rich in heritage and, to say the least, pleasing to the eye. Soft curves, domes and arches lent the area a tranquil atmosphere.

But all of this is now abruptly interrupted by a recently completed mall, which, in the midst of terms, sticks out like a sore thumb. The mall's exterior, mainly white and pastel green and orange ceramic tiles, tends to shock the eyes, while the building's shape offers little in the way of comfort — it is primarily square.

In modern Cairo this aesthetic interruption is certainly not uncommon. In fact, in the midst of Al-Azhar, Helipolis, Maadi, and the city centre, just to name a few areas, several new buildings stand out from a mile away — in terms of architectural design, shape and colour.

"There is absolutely no homogeneity when it comes to construction in Cairo any more and certainly no criterion for the facade of a building or the colour of a building's exterior," complains veteran housing expert Milad Hanna.

Cairo has become an exhibition centre for a carnival of buildings, Hanna says. "Wherever you look, you see a 13-story ultra-modern building next to a six-story beautiful but unkempt older one. And both of those often look upon the abandoned concrete frame of a building that for some reason has not, and will not, be completed." There seems to be little, if any, order.

Architect Salah Hegab, chairman of the board of the Egyptian Society for Architecture and chairman of the Egyptian Society for Urban and Regional Planning, laments the fact that harmony — an essential element in architectural planning — is not taken into account when new buildings are constructed.

"In university we were taught to visit the site of construction before drawing anything. That way an architect can design something which conforms to its surroundings. The design does not have to be the same, but it should not be odd looking," explains Hegab.

Aside from buildings which seem "odd-looking", worse perhaps are the many "match-box buildings" popping up around the city. According to Hegab the reasons are many. Architecture is the product of three parties: the client, the architect and the contractor. "These days many clients in the private sector are not cultured and will build just about anything — they are not concerned with beauty and culture. Some of the buildings we see today in Cairo are thus the product of uncultured people with money, whose architecture is not reflective of Egyptian heritage," Hegab says.

And even if the architect is talented and culturally sensitive, "when a client interferes, there is only a 50-50 chance the building won't be ugly," he explains. Often prohibitive costs prompt clients to hire contractors who charge unreasonably low fees. "A cheap contractor means cheap work," he adds.

The problem, according to Hegab, is that many people do not realise they are adding a more or less permanent element to the city's streets. "In any city you do not see the people, they are merely faces that you pass on the street. What you do see is the architecture, which reflects the life, culture and social status of those in the city," explains Hanna. It is for this reason that preserving beauty and order in Cairo streets is essential.

It is possible to design buildings which possess both old architectural characteristics and modern ones, says Hegab, and there are numerous examples around Cairo. Unfortunately, though, since these buildings tend to blend in so well, they often go unnoticed. It is only the more odd-looking ones that stand out.

Previously, in parts of Cairo there were rules and regulations, implemented by a designated committee, concerning the design of a building, with particular emphasis on its facade. These regulations are no longer enforced and although efforts have been made to re-implement them, they have proven fruitless. "The law does give the government the right to place restrictions on the design of a building's facade and the colour of its exterior," Hegab says. "But to the best of my knowledge the government has not yet exercised this right," he adds.

Parliament has passed a new construction law, but it does not address the issue of "harmony on our streets," explains Hegab. Instead it concentrates on the maximum height and width of a building. And Hanna warns, the specifications of the measure will only add to the already existing carnival of buildings.

There are by-laws to accompany the new construction code, but they offer little help for preserving architectural heritage in modern Cairo. "In my opinion the by-laws do not address the issue of exterior design," Hanna says. "This is a matter of cultural concern, and I don't believe those setting the by-laws are really

the ugly match-box-like buildings," said Fawzi who designed several Neo-Islamic buildings at different resorts in Sharm El-Sheikh.

The new eclectic style of architecture has often been praised as a counter-weight to the ugly construction trend. But it has its drawbacks.

According to El-Qasbi, "The poor attempts of some unskilled architects to integrate elements of Islamic architecture into modern buildings have sometimes proven clumsy. And the outcome is an insult to the aesthetic values of Islamic and traditional Egyptian schools of building," he said.

In essence, the structural and decorative elements of both the Islamic and traditional Egyptian styles are quite flexible. There is

no reason why you cannot mix and match," said Nadim. "But it cannot be done at random. It takes an architect with full understanding of the old styles and modern taste," she added.

Official committees that revise the structural plans of new buildings for safety standards should also check style, said Fawzi.

Constructing more beautiful buildings, architects and designers agree, is a beneficial task for both the public and private sector.

Nadim suggests that public buildings should be the first step: "If every time the state builds a new public service building or large housing compound it makes sure it has a nice distinctive Islamic-Egyptian style, then a small private building or house

Sushi and sun

For Tarek El-Tablawy, the allure of deep sea fishing stems from that primal desire all men have to brave danger, bond and avoid work for a few days

At the tender age of nine, I would sit glued before the television, watching Patrick Duffy, in *The Man From Atlantis*, cut through the clear blue water of the Atlantic — and I would envy him. "It must be amazing," I said to myself, "to be able to stay underwater that long, swim with the sharks and dolphins, wear a skin-tight lemon yellow Speedo swimsuit without having people laugh at you as you emerge from the water with your bouffant hairstyle still intact." So was born my dream to be a marine biologist.

However, while some dreams are realised and some die hard, others are simply amended. So was the case with this one. Some 16 years have passed since I imagined myself plunging into the deep blue abyss, years during which I lost all respect for Duffy after watching him in *Dallas* and decided it was better to write than to actually do anything physical. In fact, the best compromise I could come up with that bridged my desire to write and my interest in the sea was fishing.

And, while other sports reporters usually have some athletic inclinations, one who writes about fishing needn't do anything more than bait the hook and cast the line. If you're wealthy enough, you can even get someone else to do this for you, thereby eliminating the physical factor altogether.

I WAS onboard the 150 horsepower, 25-foot cab-in-cruiser, *Reham*, off the coast of the Red Sea resort town of Hurgada with the members of the Dooki Shooting Club's deep-sea fishing team, Dr Mohamed Qassem, Fakhry Hussein Akbar, aka. "El-Hagg", Mohamed El-Dib and his two sons, Mahmoud and Ahmed (who were along for the ride). The skipper of the *Reham* was Khamis and his side-kick was Salama, who, when not acting in the capacity of the first mate and swabbie, was the butt of most of our jokes. The master of our hearts and our stomachs was Said. With his pasta sauce-spattered, striped T-shirt he looked the part of the sailor-cook.

The team was one of 15 participating in a fishing tournament sponsored by the Hurgada Marine Sports Club in memory of its second president, Gamil Nazim. The night before we pulled out of dock we were treated to a motivational speech at the club which had the team members riveted and myself, as well as the other journalists, asleep in our chairs. The evening was capped with some Fanta and pastries and that general sense of merriment that most people feel when they realise that they are going to be away from their jobs and spouses for a few days doing something as mindless and futile as arguing with relatives.

ON THE *Reham*, everyone had a job. Salama was belatedly untying the ropes that secured us to the dock, Khamis was screaming at Salama while steering the boat and exhibiting the kind of nautical experience and sea-worthiness that makes landlubbers like myself look like a complete waste of genes. El-Hagg, Mohamed and Dr Qassem were fiddling with their rods. My job was to stay out of the way and not throw up as the boat careened over the waves. This is one of the pre-

requisites for going deep sea fishing. Aside from having to be fundamentally lazy and unathletic, a good deep sea fisherman, like a war correspondent or restaurant reviewer, must never punt his brain muffins — at least not where anyone can see him do it.

We were not, however, doing this merely for the fun of fishing. We were part of a tournament, and sportsmanlike conduct and mercy, at least with regard to the way we dealt with the fish, was not an issue. What mattered was tonnage. For three days we were expected to reel them in, lob them in a cooler and then weigh them in order to secure the prize money. If we couldn't get the most fish, then we had to collect the most garbage since one of the prizes was earmarked for those who filled three trash bags while on the high seas.

Given our objective, Jacques Cousteau would probably be rolling over in his grave. Deep sea fishing, in this light, is one of the most futile, meaningless, blatantly wasteful and environmentally unfriendly activities created by man. But there are also few things more appealing to the male portion of the human race short of all-out naval warfare. Not since the invention of all-male clubs and military survival school has an activity been designed which gathers so many men in one place where they can't shower or shave, but have ample time to eat, drink and talk about politics, women and life.

WE SET sail on a blisteringly hot Sinai summer day. The water was a shade of blue so deep that it looked fake — like blue-tinted contacts on a brown-eyed woman. Not a cloud was present to break up the canopy of sapphire blue that made up the sky. The waves were as high as OJ Simpson's defense team after an acquittal. The rods were set out in little holes around the stern (the nautical way of saying the back of the boat). We were trolling at about 7 knots (a knot being the same as a mile, but more expensive). The idea behind trolling is to let the line drag behind the boat, in the hope that some fish will take the bait, so to speak, while we move to an area in the water that has more fish.

There's a lot of excitement when a fish strikes, most of it for the fish. A tug on one of the troll lines has the rod emitting a sizzling sound, much like kosher bacon cooking in a frying pan. The experienced fisherman then leaps at the rod, secures himself in the chair and begins to reel it in. There is a measure of skill required to doing this successfully, especially since a large fish will run out as much line as a teenage girl will credit on a Visa card. Once the fish has taken the line, you pull back on the rod while reeling in the line. Then you relax. Then you reel in again. The important thing is not to give the fish any slack at all. This is, of course, strictly speaking, in physical terms. You can have any kind of emotional relationship with it that you want. If you're lucky, the fish will gyrate and jump as high as fish do on brochures published by deep sea fishing charter companies. If you're not, then you'll probably reel in an old tyre or a plastic jug.

THE competition aside, deep sea fishing, in itself, has nothing to do with the beauty of nature. It's about a nature that is as cruel and unyielding as an American wife taking her husband to the cleaners in divorce court. Most of the fish that is there for the taking is extremely ugly. But in a very strange, Darwin on LSD sort-of-way, it's a microcosmic, aquatic representation of the satisfying, yet futile struggle we face on terra firma. For example, we saw a number of barracuda, and catching one would have been very satisfying, albeit very futile. Not only do they taste like rubber, they can give you ciguatera, a disease so foul it'll have you longing for an evening of dish-throwing with your ex-spouse. They are also hideous, with long, torpedo-like bodies and teeth the size of the jaws on a medieval chastity belt. The kingfish that we did catch felt victim to the barracuda, allowing us to bring onto the boat only half the fish.

Nor does deep-sea fishing have anything to do with nature's grand design. I sat and watched for hours as grouper after grouper took the bait and was pulled onto the boat quicker than we could re bait the hook.

At best, watching this show was monotonous — as sitting for three days on a boat the size



"Tastes great grilled with a twist of lemon and garlic"

photo: Mohamed El-Qe1

groupers, sailfish or anything else that was big and smelly like a fish. In the US, sail fish that are caught are released because there aren't enough of them around. In the Red Sea, such restrictions are unfortunately not heeded. In fact, the only steadfast rule relayed to us in the previous evening's banquet was that all fish had to be caught using legal means. In essence, this means that using depth charges, dynamite or going to the local fish market and purchasing a whopper are unsportsmanlike. All else is fair.

As we headed further out to sea, the team members were preparing their lines. Salama was getting underfoot. I was clutching frantically onto the railing and Khamis was looking for fish. I have no idea how. Maybe this was knowledge gained from 12 years on the open seas, or maybe the fish left their phone numbers on the channel buoys.

About 15km out of port, the centre rod snagged on something heavy and let out a ripping sound most readily likened to the sound made by a pair of tuxedo pants tearing while their owner attempts the Lambada during a New Year's eve party. It was the first bite of the trip, and all hands were on deck, sweaty with anticipation. The fish put up an admirable fight (if you admire fish), and gave Dr Qassem enough of a struggle that he could exaggerate about it later, but broke free from the line, taking the red-head with it, once and for all testifying to how futile, yet satisfying, fishing is.

THE competition aside, deep sea fishing, in itself, has nothing to do with the beauty of nature. It's about a nature that is as cruel and unyielding as an American wife taking her husband to the cleaners in divorce court. Most of the fish that is there for the taking is extremely ugly. But in a very strange, Darwin on LSD sort-of-way, it's a microcosmic, aquatic representation of the satisfying, yet futile struggle we face on terra firma. For example, we saw a number of barracuda, and catching one would have been very satisfying, albeit very futile. Not only do they taste like rubber, they can give you ciguatera, a disease so foul it'll have you longing for an evening of dish-throwing with your ex-spouse. They are also hideous, with long, torpedo-like bodies and teeth the size of the jaws on a medieval chastity belt. The kingfish that we did catch felt victim to the barracuda, allowing us to bring onto the boat only half the fish.

Nor does deep-sea fishing have anything to do with nature's grand design. I sat and watched for hours as grouper after grouper took the bait and was pulled onto the boat quicker than we could re bait the hook.

At best, watching this show was monotonous — as sitting for three days on a boat the size

of a king-size bed must be. But it's also satisfying, a first hand witnessing of the struggle for supremacy in nature. Though, had any of us fallen in the drink with sharks around, we would have automatically moved to the bottom of the food chain.

There's a certain myopic, introspective allure to deep sea fishing. During the day, a Darwinian struggle ensues between man and fish. But, by night, one can't help but reflect on the cliché that we call life. The moonlight shimmers on the water, making it look like an endless black satin sheet under a fluorescent light. The boat is cradled in the arms of gentle waves and a fish lies at your feet gasping for air while you tower above it, laughing triumphantly at how man once again has defeated a lesser species and stands ready to collect the prize money. This is, after all, what life is all about — exploiting everything that isn't nailed down, all in a bid to earn a fat check.

On a more humane level, however, it's easy to become intimidated by how alone we all are. The emptiness of the sea makes this fact more poignant. We were at its mercy. A cup of Nescafe, a Hostess Twinkies cake or two, a ramblous conversation with your fellow fishermen and a few packs of cigarettes do well to minimise this sense of alienation, but the feeling is far from negated.

MEAN, stupid and futile — especially futile, deep-sea fishing and the average politician have a lot in common. This is the real lesson to be learned from the sport. Another testimony to how irresponsible, yet pleasurable, the sport is, is underscored by the fact that you have to go somewhere exotic, away from the family and job, spend copious amounts of cash in order to do it. Locations such as Key West, Costa Rica, Cabo San Lucas and Australia are prime, but so too is the Red Sea, especially Hurgada, Sharm El-Sheikh and El-Quseir. The draw back to such locales, as Jimmy Buffet would say, is that you must cope with hundreds of sun-burned "tourists" just covered with oil. Better to stay on board the boat where the biggest problem is using the restroom without losing your balance.

AS WE pulled into the dock, a band struck up a rendition of something, but played it so poorly that your guess is as good as mine as to what the song was. I stumbled onto the dock and my legs, now used to the rocking of the boat, felt like jelly on the cement. Overblown as the reception was, I and my shipmates couldn't help but feel a small measure of pride. We had braved the sea for a few days, lived in conditions most would have shuddered at, managed not to sit on any hooks, throw up, get diarrhoea or vomit and hauled in 76kg of fish. Captain Ahab couldn't have done it any better — especially since he died.

How to get there

Buses

Super Jet, East Delta and West Delta buses operate throughout Egypt.

Super Jet
Super Jet stations are located in Heliopolis, Tahrir, Giza, Ramsis Street and Cairo Airport. Buses travel to Alexandria, Port Said, Hurgada and Sinai. Tel. 772-663.

Cairo-Alexandria
Services almost every half hour from 5.30am to 10pm, from Tahrir, then Giza, Almaza and the airport. Tickets LE19 until 9pm; LE21 thereafter; from the airport LE24 until 5pm; LE30 thereafter.

Cairo-Port Said
Services every half hour from 6am to 8am; then 9am, 10am, 3pm, and 4.30pm, from Almaza, then Ramsis Street. Tickets LE15 each way.

Alexandria-Port Said
Services 6.45am, from Ramsis Square in Alexandria. Departs Port Said 3.30pm. Tickets LE22 each way.

Cairo-Hurgada
Services 8am and 2pm, from Tahrir, then Giza and Almaza. Departs Hurgada noon and 5pm. Tickets LE40 until 5pm, LE45 thereafter, both each way.

Alexandria-Hurgada
Service 8pm, from Ramsis Square, Alexandria. Departs Hurgada 2.30pm. Tickets LE60 each way.

Cairo-Sharm El-Sheikh
Service 11pm, from Tahrir, then Almaza. Departs Sharm El-Sheikh 11pm. Tickets LE50 each way.

East Delta Bus Company
Buses travel to North Sinai, South Sinai, Suez and Ismailia. Buses to Ismailia and Suez depart from Qalbi (near Ramsis Square). Almaza and Tagrid Square (near Heliopolis). Buses to North and South Sinai depart from the Sinai bus station at Abbassiya Square. Tel. 482-4755.

Cairo-Ismailia
Services every 45 minutes from 6.30am to 6pm, from Qalbi, then Almaza and Tagrid Square. Tickets deluxe bus LE57.5; air-conditioned bus LE52.5, one way.

Cairo-Suez
Services every half an hour from 6am to 7pm, from Qalbi, then Almaza and Tagrid Square. Tickets deluxe bus LE57.5; air-conditioned bus LE5, one way.

Cairo-El-Arish
Services every hour from 7.30am to 4pm, from Qalbi, then Almaza and Tagrid Square. Tickets deluxe bus LE57.5; air-conditioned bus LE13, one way.

Cairo-Sharm El-Sheikh
Services every 45 min. from 7am to 6.30pm from Abbassiya, then Almaza. Tickets morning LE27; evening LE40, one way.

Cairo-Nuweiba
Service 8am, from Abbassiya, then Almaza. Tickets deluxe bus LE31.

West Delta Bus
Stations at Tahrir and Almaza. Tel. 243-1846.

Cairo-Hurgada
Services 9am, noon, 3pm, 10.30pm, 10.45pm and 11pm. Tickets LE30 one way.

Cairo-Safage
Services 9am and 3pm. Tickets LE35 one way.

Cairo-Quseir
Service 10pm. Tickets LE38 one way.

Cairo-Luxor
Service 9am. Tickets LE35 one way.

Cairo-Aswan
Service 5pm. Tickets LE50 one way.

Trains
Trains run to Alexandria, Port Said, Luxor and Aswan, from Ramsis Station. Tel. 147 or 575-3555.

Cairo-Luxor-Aswan
"Express" deluxe trains with sleepers. Services to Luxor and Aswan 7.40pm and 9pm (reaching Luxor 6.40 am and 8am, Aswan

8.40am and 10am). Tickets to Luxor LE294 for foreigners and LE129 for Egyptians; to Aswan LE300 for foreigners, LE141 for Egyptians.

"Spanish" deluxe trains without sleepers. Services to Luxor and Aswan 6.45pm, 8.45pm and 9.45pm. Tickets to Luxor: first class LE51; second class LE31. Tickets to Aswan: first class LE63; second class LE37.

Cairo-Alexandria
"Tahira" train. Service 8am. Tickets first class LE32 with a meal, LE22 without a meal. Standard trains: Services 9am, 11am, noon, 5pm and 7pm. Tickets first class LE22; second class LE17.

"French" trains
Services hourly from 6am to 10.30pm. Tickets first class LE20; second class LE12.

Cairo-Port Said
Services 6.20am and 8.45am. Tickets first class LE45; second class LE26.

EgyptAir
There are between two and five domestic flights daily. Check EgyptAir. Ady 390-0999. Office 390-2444, or Hilton 759-9888.

Cairo-Aswan
Tickets LE300 for Egyptians, LE91 for foreigners. "With round-trip."

Cairo-Luxor
Tickets LE220 for Egyptians, LE780 for foreigners. "With round-trip."

Cairo-Hurgada
LE780 for foreigners. "With round-trip."

Cairo-Sharm El-Sheikh
Tickets LE246 for Egyptians, LE821 for foreigners. "With round-trip."

Sunny summer deals

Hotels

Here's a look at the special rates, most hotels, especially resorts, are offering...to Egyptians and foreign residents.

Hurgada
Sonesta beach resort Hurgada. LE2185 for a double room including service charge, taxes and buffet breakfast. Valid until the end of July.

Haban Regency Hurgada
LE170 per person in a double room including breakfast, water, taxes and service. Valid until the end of the summer season.

Goma
El-Goma Sonesta Papagayo. LE135 per person in a double room on half board. Taxes including service charge and taxes. Valid until the end of July.

Sharm El-Sheikh
Sonesta Beach Resort Sharm El-Sheikh. LE230 for a double room including service charge, taxes and buffet breakfast. Valid until the end of July.

Sharm El-Sheikh
LE240 for a single or double room including buffet breakfast, service charge and taxes. Valid until 31 July.

Sharm El-Sheikh
Movenpick Hotel. LE200 for a single and LE250 for a double room. The hotel offers prices of LE160 for a single and LE200 for a double room in the back or sports area. Prices include buffet breakfast, service charge and taxes. Valid until the end of July.

Travel agencies

Travel agencies are offering various packages both inside and outside Egypt this summer.

Flamingo Tours: A trip to Alice is LE2,850 for 8 days. Nice and London is LE3,490 for 13 days. Spain and Portugal is LE2,500 for 11 days. Rome and Sicily is LE3,280 for 10 days. Paris and London is LE4,950 for 15 days. Rome, Florence, Venice is LE4,750 for 10 days. And Singapore, Tokyo, Hong Kong, Bangkok is \$3,335 for 12 days. Prices for a special cruise around the Mediterranean in deluxe boats start from \$1,382 for 8 days.

Karnak Tours is organising trips to Marsa Matruh for 4 nights in three star hotels on a half board basis at prices starting from LE294. The company is also offering trips to Istanbul for 8 days at prices starting from LE1,450.

Taba airport opens

THE ITALIAN travel company Turisenda was the first to send a charter flight, carrying 50 prominent Italian media representatives, from Milan to Taba's newly opened airport last week.

Turisenda plans to initially offer weekly charter flights between Milan and Taba for four months before it expands its services.

"Taba airport is a necessary addition to our infrastructure in the Taba-Nuweiba area. Sharm El-Sheikh airport in the south, the airport planned for Dahab and the new Taba airport will enhance tourism in the area," said Minister of Tourism Mamdouh El-Beltagi.

Italy is one of Egypt's biggest markets for tourism. In 1995, 257,000 Italians came to Egypt — a 96 per cent increase compared to last year.

Music to the ears

CAIRO will again be in harmony once again when the city's Second International Song Festival begins at the end of this month at the Cairo International Conference Centre (CICC).

The event, which will be held between 31 July and 6 August, will be a week-long festival of arts and entertainment. Several composers, songwriters and singers from all corners of the world will compete. Participants are expected to come from Egypt, Algeria, Argentina, Canada, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Romania, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Syria, United Kingdom and the USA.

EGYPT AIR

Telephone numbers of EGYPT AIR offices in governorates:

Abu Simbel Sales Office:	34836-348735
Alexandria Office: Ram:	483357-483778
Gleem:	584561-584534
Airport Office:	4218464-421788-428237-428193
Aswan Office:	315000/1/2/3/4
Airport Office:	483497-488588
Assiut Office:	323151-322711-324000-329497
Mansoura Office:	36378-363733
Hurgada Office:	443591/4
Airport Office:	442883-443597
Ismailia Office:	328337-221350-221351/2-328336
Luxor Office:	386580/1/2/3/4
Airport Office:	386567/8
Luxor Office Karnak:	382346
Marsa Matruh Office:	334398
Menoufia Office (Shein El Koni):	233361-233523-233522
New Valley Office:	688/91/695
Port Said Office:	224129-222878-228921
Port Said Office Karnak:	238333-239978
Sharm El Sheikh Office:	608314-608409
Airport Office:	608408
Taba Office:	608/330110-330011
Direct:	5783628
Tanta Office:	311750/311750
Zakazik Office:	349828-349830/1

July's masterpiece

THE EGYPTIAN museum's artefact of the month is a crystalline limestone statue of General Nakhtmin's wife, writes Nevine El-Aref. The statue dates back to the New Kingdom's 18th Dynasty, ruled by King Ay.

This month's masterpiece, on display in the entrance hall of the museum, is 85cm long and 44cm wide.

"The provenance of the statue is unknown, but it was purchased in 1897," said Mohamed Gomaa, director-general of archaeological affairs at the Egyptian museum. The statue was previously displayed with the bust of its spouse in hall number 15, where objects from the 18th and 19th dynasties are exhibited.



سكز لمن زلمل

Opening celebrations for the 36th IAA Congress to be held at the International Conference Centre in Nasr City

Sponsors of the congress includes Egyptian banks as well as domestic and foreign companies

EGYPT has won the bid to host the 36th International Advertising Association (IAA) Congress. The opening celebrations of the congress, to be held at the Cairo International Conference Centre in Nasr City in May 1998, will be inaugurated by President Mohamed Hosni Mubarak. The IAA Egypt branch and the board of directors of the IAA in New York are currently deciding on a keynote speaker for the congress, whose candidates include former United States President George Bush and Secretary of State James Baker. Other speakers

are being selected from all corners of the globe. Sessions of the congress will take place at the Semiramis Intercontinental Hotel. Simultaneously, a communications exhibition will be held, with local and foreign companies participating. The theme of the congress, Interaction, was chosen due to the communications revolution that is currently taking place all over the world, influencing means of marketing and advertising. Foremost among these influences

By Ahmed Kamel Awad

are satellite television stations and the Internet, in addition to other means of communication and information transmission. This in turn has affected the behaviour of consumers, the way they lead their lives and how they choose what they purchase. The congress will deal with means of developing advertising and marketing strategies

in light of this communications revolution, which has brought the world closer together. President Mubarak underscored the importance of these developments as he addressed participants during the last IAA Congress: "The revolution in communications has made our world a small global village, just as the media in Egypt, in all their forms, has been able to cover a great deal of ground in keeping pace with this revolution to find for themselves a fitting place on the international map of information."

Sponsors of the congress have been selected from among Egyptian banks and major companies and organisations, both domestic and foreign. The head of IAA Egypt received a letter from Mohamed Al-Fal, deputy-member of the Gulf Advertising and Public Relations Company in Jeddah, requesting to reserve the evening of 11 May 1998 to welcome members of the congress, while Talal Dallimi, vice-president of the ARA Group for Marketing and Sales reserved the night of 12 May 1998.

In the eyes of the world

THERE IS no doubt that in the media, the written word is more effective and efficient in the long run, for it is considered a permanent document. Yet when I tried to record the opinions of the delegations attending the Egyptian Night, I found the written word was not sufficient enough to convey the feelings, reactions, and impressions of the attendees. How can I describe the impressions of the 300 congress members who came from all over the world? How can I describe the wonder on the faces of university students from Korea and America, or the remarkable comments said in a multitude of languages? How can I describe the line of hundreds of people who stayed until the end of the party to congratulate the Egyptian delegation on the success of the Egyptian Night?

Although words may not be enough, I will do my best to convey the feelings and opinions of most of the different nationalities who attended the party. The first person I met was Ingmar Bastcar, a Swede, whose wife answered my question saying, "what we have seen here tonight made us determined to visit Egypt, especially to Cairo. It seems such a romantic and attractive city. Personally, I find Egypt a suitable country for such a creative and untraditional field of work like advertising. I think I will be able to accomplish all the things I dreamed of doing as a Media Planner, and I think my company and I will benefit a lot from coming to the Cairo Congress in 1998."

The next person I met was a Korean who is well-known in political, economic and intellectual circles, Kwok Yung-Hoon, president of a Korean group-establishments. Hoon said "the night was full of many things that reflected everything characterising Egypt. I enjoyed the show on tourist sites in Egypt, its monuments and history. But before that, the opening ceremony was very good, especially President Mubarak's speech which was direct and to the point, but managed to shed light on Egypt's history and prospects for future development. I am also interested in the topic which will be discussed in the 1998 congress. I have been fortunate to have previously visited Egypt, and enjoyed its beaches, and I would be happy to visit it again not only in 98, but may be even before that."

As for Mrs Hoon, she said, "I spent a week in Cairo two years ago, and I enjoyed the visit, so I have an idea about Egyptian civilization. Tonight is a very important night for the Koreans who are eager to understand the Egyptian civilization. My husband and my children, have all decided to come to Cairo for the congress in 1998."

Mr Amul Kumar Bose head of the IAA India, said, "It was a successful and wonderful night; I greatly enjoyed it. The Oriental food was also wonderful, and plentiful. I certainly intend to come to the congress in 1998 with my wife, and daughter and friends."

Mrs H Desiré, who works for a major newspaper in Turkey said, "It will be my pleasure to attend the 1998 congress in Cairo to benefit from the topics that will be discussed. I am also looking forward to seeing my friends in Egypt. As for tonight's show, it was wonderful. We are all proud of it and we liked the Egyptian music, which was very familiar to us."

Charlotte Carlson, manager of the trade publication Media International, said "we enjoyed the Egyptian Night very much especially the food which is the best we ate since we came to Korea. We also liked the spectacular show. I'm looking forward going to the Cairo congress in 1998 with at least four of my colleagues."

Mr Hamming is a German head of an American transport company, who attended the conference with his wife. He said, "I enjoyed the Egyptian Night greatly. I heard a lot about Egypt, but I never visited it before. I will come in 1998 because it is a good opportunity to meet my friends in Egypt and other Arab countries again. The Egyptian Night was truly a success." His wife, Elizabeth, who works at the German Cultural Centre in Seoul, said, "I enjoyed the Egyptian Night very much. It brought back many good memories of the place where I spent three of the best years of my life, and I hope I can visit Egypt again soon."

I concluded my interviews with Ibrahim Hegazy, professor of marketing at the American University in Cairo, who said, "It is better that I don't say anything about the Egyptian Night lest people might think I am exaggerating, or biased. I think it is better to take other people's opinions for they will probably have unbiased opinions."



Mrs Hoon Kwok Yung-Hoon



Mrs Hamming Ingmar Bastcar



Ibrahim Hegazy Amul Kumar Bose



Charlotte Carlson Elizabeth Matice



Talal Dallimi Mohamed Al-Fal Khamis Al-Maqlah Jean-Claude Bolis Mustafa Asad

Egyptian Night:

A night for every Arab

THE EGYPTIAN Night in Korea was a night for every Arab, for it literally gave a taste of what the forthcoming IAA Congress will be like when it is held in Cairo in 1998, the first such congress to be held in an Arab or African country. The Egyptian Night made such an impression that every Arab who attended felt that it was "his" night.

When Talal Dallimi, member of the IAA board, was asked to give his opinion in one word, he replied: "In one word? Come on, it's impossible!" He continued: "The Egyptian Night was truly a night to remember. It was a real success from every aspect. It was well-organised, the audience was very happy, and the words of President Mubarak inviting participants to attend the Cairo Congress were of great importance."

Another observer, Mohamed Al-Fal, deputy-member of the Gulf Advertising and Public Relations Company in Jeddah, commented: "It was a successful night, and I am certain that Egypt will succeed when it hosts the 1998 congress... We as Arabs stand as one for Egypt, and we will help it stand tall when this event takes place."

Khamis Al-Maqlah, head of the IAA's Bahrain branch, had this to say: "It was an impressive night. I was very impressed by the setup and organisation of the event. It was a very successful start to the Cairo 1998 Congress, and we are happy with this success. We are certain that the Cairo congress will be the best, and we wish the Egyptian branch good luck in its preparations."

Jean-Claude Bolis, vice-president of the IAA and director of the Middle East and Africa region, said: "First things first; Egypt does everything well; from the Pyramids until today. Nothing but good comes out of Egypt... The Egyptian food was delicious, and the show was fantastic! We wish Egypt, from the bottom of our hearts, all the best in the Cairo congress."

"Everything was wonderful, just wonderful!" exclaimed Mustafa Asad, head of Bibliographic Agency. "It was truly a proud moment for the Arab world. The party was terrific! The question is not whether the event was great or not, but rather, what was important was seeing everyone in the hall enjoying themselves... I am certain that the Cairo Congress of 1998 will be first-rate."

THE EGYPTIAN delegation and the organisers of the Egyptian Night: Adel Afifi, head of IAA Egypt; Lola Zaklana, IAA vice-president for conference affairs and vice-president of IAA Egypt; and members of the Egyptian delegation: Ahmed Kamel Awad, Mohamed Yusuf Habib, Mohamed Ali Mohamedain, Mushira Said, Mona Abul-Naga, Abdel-Aziz Farid, Galal Zaki, Hazem Daraa and Mohamed Abdel-Hamid.

Days before its start, the occupants of this room got no sleep as they burned the midnight oil making the necessary preparations for the Egyptian Night held at the conclusion of the 35th IAA Congress in Seoul, Korea. Some 35 cartons weighing more than 1000kg were shipped by air, containing 450 Egyptian flags of varying sizes, 3000 sheets of painted papyrus as well as publications from the Ministry of Tourism and the State Information Organisation, containing photographs and articles on Egypt, both ancient and modern, special publications on the 36th IAA Congress which will take place in Cairo, and gifts, all of which will be presented to members of the congress.

In spite of the delegation being comprised of managers and heads from various advertising and press organisations in Egypt, all felt a collective sense of responsibility in preparing for the Egyptian Night. Regardless of their positions, all carried the cartons and prepared the 3000 information packets which were distributed to members of the congress, and followed up on their delivery to the Koex Centre where the event was held.

It was through the determination and efforts of the delegation that the Egyptian Night went from being a dream on a piece of paper to reality as it lit up the conference hall.



Real to reel: promoting Egypt on film

DIFFERENT people gave different reasons for coming to the Cairo congress in 1998, but they all shared one particular reason: to tour Egypt. Some of those who attended the Egyptian Night have visited Egypt before, and even those who have never been now know a good deal more through the travelogues shown during the Egyptian Night. The first film was screened after President Mubarak's speech. Produced by the Arab Advertising Company, the film portrayed the relationship between Ancient Egyptian civilization and the country's modern development. Many think that Egypt's glory lies only in the Pyramids and antiquities, forgetting the modern country's achievements in industry, communications, and especially in tourism, represented by the country's unique resorts and vacation spots, said the company's acting manager, Ihab Talast, and the company's general manager, Tarek Syam.

The second film screened on the Egyptian Night was produced by Look Advertising Agency. It was a one-minute film but its impact was enough to last for hours or days. The company's president, Hazem Daraa, packed the film with a series of snapshots, and used different pieces of music that wouldn't allow the audience glance away from the screen for even a second. The musical finale evoked much applause and shouts of praise from the audience.

Specialty for the congress by the Cairo Semiramis Intercontinental Hotel, sent by plane to Seoul and then served by the staff of the Intercontinental Hotel in Seoul. The Intercontinental Hotel in Seoul took advantage of the success of the Egyptian Night to have a week-long promotion of Egyptian food called "A Taste of Egypt". Attendees from the Middle East and Western countries all agreed that the Egyptian food served during the Egyptian Night could be described in two words — delicious and fantastic.

Between media and tourism

Hosni Mubarak's videotaped address shown to members of the IAA Congress in Seoul, inviting them to attend the Cairo congress, reflects both the political and economic interest that the nation has in hosting this important event, said Abdel-Aziz Farid, media and tourism consultant. As a result, all national organisations, syndicates, businessmen's associations and chambers of commerce are preparing to cooperate and offer their best services for the success of the congress.

There are even more reasons for the government's concern for such a congress, as it is the first time it will be held in an African country since the IAA was founded in 1983. The congress includes media, advertising, and marketing leaders from more than 80 countries, which emphasises Egypt's increasing role in politics, economy, media, and tourism. This congress will reaffirm Egypt's ability and efficiency in organising major conferences. From a tourism point of view, the congress is important not only because the presence of IAA members is crucial for marketing tourism, through print and broadcast media, but also because of the many other benefits that can be realised. For instance, 5-star hotels will be filled to capacity with IAA delegates. Additionally, the shows, parties, dinner and lunch invitations are expected to create a substantial increase in hotel profits, especially since a communications trade fair will be held during the same time as the congress, which will attract representatives of both foreign and national companies. The Egyptian market will flourish from the sale of consumer goods and souvenirs. Tours prepared for the congress guests will enable them to know more about the wide range of tourist facilities in Egypt. Although conferences, exhibitions, and festivals represent 5 per cent of the country's tourism revenues, such activities exceed other tourism activities in terms of the number of nights, and amount of revenue brought in, which are the cornerstones of a tourism economy.



Abdel-Aziz Farid Tarek El-Husseini Mohamed Abdel-Hamid

Special offer for participants in the Cairo 1998 congress

THE IAA has agreed to offer a discount of \$150 for participants of the association's 36th annual congress which will be held in Cairo in 1998. The offer will start from now until July 1997, and applies to those using the American Express card.

Glimpses in words and pictures

The opening of the Egyptian Night began with the Korean national anthem, followed the Egyptian one. This was the first time in the 10-year history of the IAA Congress, that national anthems from both host and visiting nations were played at a congress. They were moments that stirred up feelings of emotion in the citizens of both countries. The IAA Congress is held every two years at a selected country. Countries compete to play host to the congress, aware of the significant economic, political and tourism benefits as well as the increased media exposure the winning country receives. Egypt won the bid to host the 1998 congress in a vote which took place in Zurich last September, involving the heads of IAA's branches from all over the world. Umm Kuthoum's Hadini Layali — Si-rat Al-Hubb (This is my Night — A Love Story) was heard during the dinner. At the conclusion of the Egyptian Night, the words of Wadie El-Sell which echoed through the hall: "Glorious Egypt! Land of bounty". The Egyptian food was prepared especially for the congress by the Cairo Semiramis Intercontinental Hotel, sent by plane to Seoul and then served by the staff of the Intercontinental Hotel in Seoul. The Intercontinental Hotel in Seoul took advantage of the success of the Egyptian Night to have a week-long promotion of Egyptian food called "A Taste of Egypt". Attendees from the Middle East and Western countries all agreed that the Egyptian food served during the Egyptian Night could be described in two words — delicious and fantastic.

Staff of the Intercontinental Hotel in Seoul, wearing embroidered galabiyas in front of a Pharaonic statue in the reception hall. At the entrance to the main hall, publications from the Ministry of Tourism and State Information Organisation were handed out on Egypt and its ancient and modern history. Attendees enjoyed being photographed next to the Pharaonic statues placed in all halls of the reception building.

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Mohamed Medhat Omar El-Borolossy

Borolossy is champ

EGYPT'S senior squash champion Omar El-Borolossy won the Austrian International Squash Championship from a field of 32 competitors. El-Borolossy defeated his English opponent 3-2 in the final. Teammate Mohamed Medhat came third after beating Gilbo Nardli of England 3-0. Their success has raised their world rankings — El-Borolossy jumped from 52 to 49, while Medhat jumped 11 places from 79 to 68. Both players have a heavy schedule ahead of them with the aim of raising their rankings still further. Borolossy begins a one-month trip to the Far East, where he will participate in three championships — in Malaysia, Singapore and Hong Kong. Medhat is to travel to the USA where he will take part in four tournaments.

Juniors' boxing win

LAST week, Egypt's junior boxers won the third Arab Boxing Championship, held in Jordan from 6-11 July. Although it was their first time to participate in an Arab championship, Egypt's juniors collected nine medals: five gold, one silver and three bronze to win first place and the championship's cup. Seven participated in the six-day event: Jordan, Egypt, Syria, Kuwait, Palestine and Lebanon. At the end of the championship, Egypt had 28 points, Jordan came second with 23 and Syria third with 16.

"This is a great achievement for the Egyptian juniors... it's their first time to snatch a cup from the host country," commented Ismail Hamed, president of the Arab Boxing Federation. "I'm very optimistic about future because this team is being prepared to represent Egypt in the 2004 Olympics," added federation manager Salah El-Dab'a.

The challengers

Last week Egypt beat Côte d'Ivoire 3-2 in Cairo in the second round of the Davis Cup Euro-African Zone II qualifications. Egypt will meet England in Cairo next month.

Egypt's number one player, Tamer El-Sawi, ousted his rival Clement N'guran 5-2, 7-5, 6-1, in quite an easy game. Amr Ghoneim managed to beat his Côte d'Ivoire opponent, Clode N'guran, Clement's younger brother, 3-6, 6-3, 6-1, 4-6, 6-3. The Egyptian doubles team, El-Sawi and Hisham Hemeida, who had only been defeated once before in Davis Cup qualification matches, lost 4-6, 1-6, 3-6, to the powerful N'guran brothers. El-Sawi beat Claude 6-4, 6-2, 6-1 in a quick match where El-Sawi's strong, artistic shots impressed his fans. However Amr Ghoneim's play was not up to standard and he lost 2-6, 3-6 to Clement.



Tamer El-Sawi

Auto cross

NASSER Abu Heif won the second round of Egypt's 1996 Auto Cross competition, organised by the Egyptian Automobile Club. Abu-Heif's second round win has spurred the competition between him and Mohamed El-Sweidi, who won the first round two months earlier. The winner will be determined in the third round in November. El-Sweidi came in second place after Abu Heif; they were followed by Samir Fawzi, with Walid Amir in fourth place, and Nader El-Khatat in fifth.

Shooting championship

HEAD of the Egyptian Shooting Federation, Abdel-Latif Mabrouk, has declared that the federation is bidding to host the third Arab Shooting Championship in Cairo next May. The federation, he said, was keen to host this event to replace the Arab Games, which had been scheduled to take place in Lebanon next September, but postponed to the following year. The championship will include skeet and trap events, and doubles and air guns for men, women and juniors.

Junior squash in Cairo

THE INDIVIDUAL event of the World Junior Squash Championship began on Saturday at the Cairo Stadium complex. The final will be played tomorrow, Friday. According to the World Squash Federation's seedings, Egypt's Ahmed Faizy is the top junior player, followed by Britain's Lee Beachill seeded number two. Stewart Boswell from Australia is number three, and Ong Beng Hee of Malaysia is the fourth seed. Egypt's Karim El-Mistikawi is ranked from five to eight, and Amr Shabana from nine to 17. Faizy and France's Stéphane Galiffi, who is also ranked from nine to 17, are the only two professionals in the championship.

After two days of the individual event, junior national team coach Amir Wagh said that Faizy was expected to win the event easily, because his physical fitness has reached an even higher level and he is now ranked 35 in the senior rankings. Faizy's hardest opponent could be Lee Beachill; Faizy's win over Beachill in the British Junior Open last January was not an easy one. International coach Ahmed Safwat said that the Egyptians also had a good chance of winning the World Junior Team Championships. However, he added that when the current junior team progresses to the seniors there will be a gap, because Mohamed Abbas, the only major hopeful to follow the current team, is five years younger than them. The team event begins on Sunday.



Maj. Gen. Sameh Moubasher receives the Cup

Police activities:

THE POLICE sporting activities was concluded last Monday. The finals of Soccer, handball and volleyball were held at the Police Sporting Union in Abbassiya. The overall trophy went to the central security force coming in the first place, while the Cairo security came behind in the second place. The cups and medals were distributed to the winners by Maj. Gen. Taher Hegah, head of the Police Supreme Council.

100 years of Games

Olympic trivia and factoids

1896, Athens, Greece

The first modern Olympic Games were held in 1896 from 6 to 15 April, and they were declared open by King George of Greece. 13 delegations competed in the first Olympic Games with 311 athletes participated.

Women were not allowed to compete.

The Olympic rings, one of the most widely-recognised symbols of the Olympic games, did not exist in these games.

The opening ceremony took place during the day, beginning with the king's arrival at 3 pm.

Dimitrios Loundras of Greece is the youngest recorded Olympian, just 10 years and 218 days old when he competed in the gymnastics event.

The Games were made up of 42 events.

Funds to stage the Olympics were raised by the sale of commemorative medals and stamps and private donations.

Athletes competed in nine different sports.

Swimmers competed in open waters, with the temperature of the water falling as low as 13 Celsius.

James Brendan Connolly of the US won the first medal of the Games, with a 13.71 metre triple jump.

Football was an exhibition sport in 1896.

The first race was the opening heat of the 100m dash, won by Francis Lane of the US in 12 1/5 seconds.

There was only one category in the wrestling competition—Greco Roman heavyweight with no weight limit.

A 120-hour bike race was held, the winner of which covered 300 km during the race.

Many of the events were held in the Pantheon Stadium, which had a capacity of 50,000.

40,000 spectators witnessed the opening ceremony, held in the Pantheon.

Competitors ran on a cinder track which was laid out along the lines of the ancient design, two straight-ways and two hair pin turns.

Only first and second place finalists were awarded medals.

Winners received silver medals and crowns of olive branches while second-place finalists received bronze medals.

Medals were awarded during the closing ceremony.

The marathon course was approximately 40km in length.

Participants in the Marathon ran from the battlefield of Marathon to the stadium in Athens.

Cyclists raced for a distance of 89.6 km from Athens to Marathon.

Scoring was done by hand in 1896.

Of the nine sports on the programme, four have been on every programme since the first Olympic Games; athletics, cycling, fencing and swimming.

Tickets for competition were approximately 16 cents.

The Pantheon Stadium underwent \$150,000 in repairs prior to the start of the Olympics.

The weightlifting competition included both one-handed and two-handed events.

1996, Atlanta, USA

The 1996 Olympic Games are the 26th Olympiad, and mark the 100th anniversary of the modern Olympic games.

The Games open 19 July and 4 August. The opening ceremony will begin at sunset, approximately at 8:30 pm.

197 National Olympic Committee member states will take part in the centennial games, with more than 10,000 athletes competing.

President Bill Clinton will inaugurate the games.

A record number of female athletes, more than 3,700, will compete.

The Olympic rings logo, created in 1913, is now universally recognised as the symbol of the games.

The games will have 271 medal events.

The games include 26 sports.

Swimmers compete in 25 to 26 degrees Celsius water in an Olympic-size swimming pool.

The first medal of the 1996 Games will be awarded in shooting.

Women's football will premiere as a medal sport in the 1996 games.

The first session of the games, women's field hockey, will begin at 8:30 am on 20 July, and will be held at the Morris Brown College.

In the men's cycling road race, competitors will cover approximately 221 km.

Atlanta's Olympic stadium has a capacity of 83,100.

The games' ceremonies are expected to draw a worldwide television audience of more than 3.5 billion people.

Athletes will run on a state-of-the-art MONDO track.

The Olympic stadium houses a 400 metre oval track with eight lanes.

Gold, silver, and bronze medals are awarded during victory ceremonies, as soon as possible after an event has ended and certificates will be awarded to the athletes who place in the top eight.

The 1996 marathon course is 42.195 km.

Runners in the marathon will compete on a course that runs throughout metro Atlanta, and will finish in the Olympic stadium.

Both men and women will compete in the cycling road race, completing laps of a course that runs through the streets of Atlanta.

Though events within sports differ, all nine 1896 sports are in the 1996 programme.

The average ticket price for the 1996 Games is \$39.72.

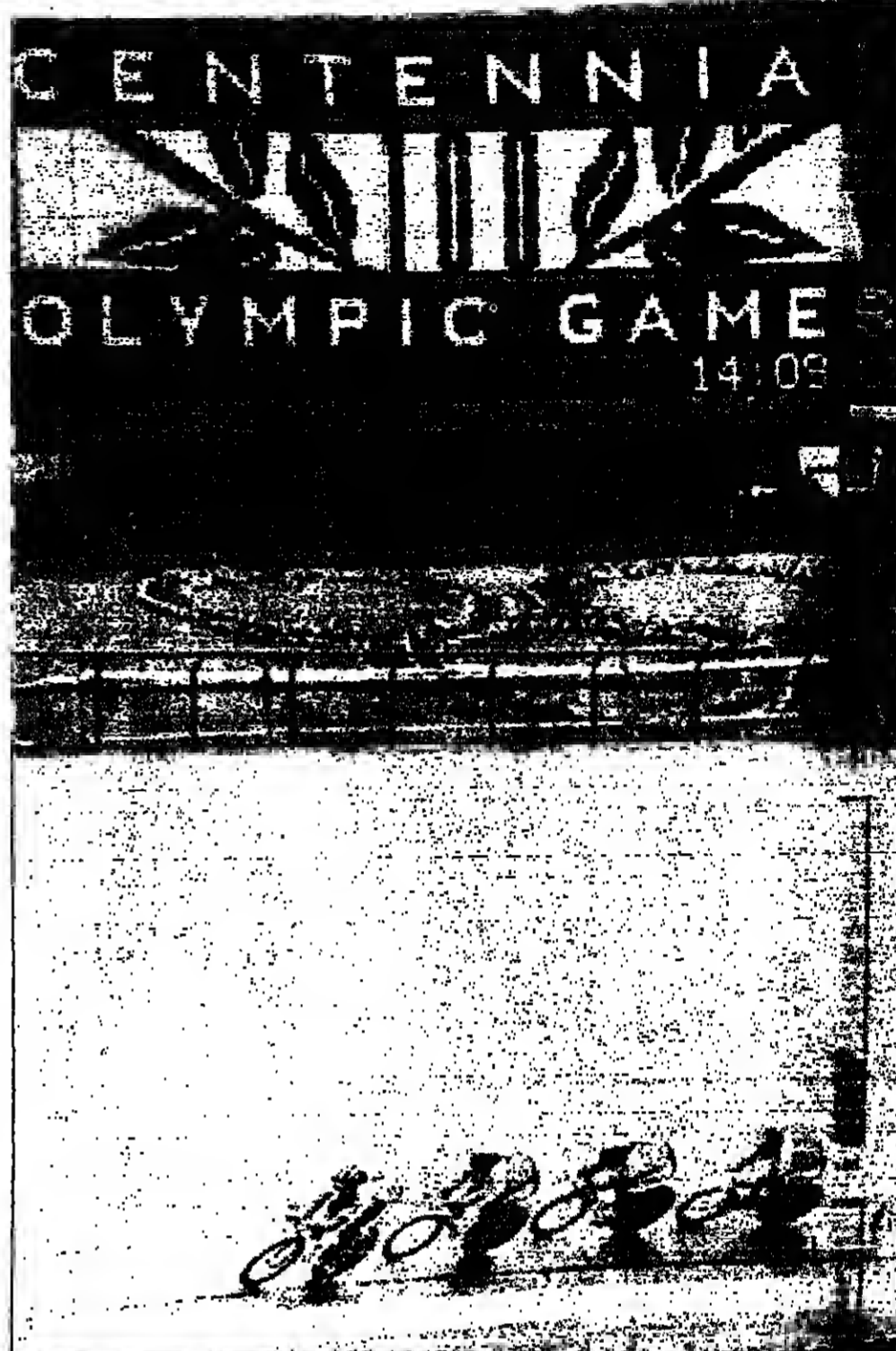
The Olympic stadium in Atlanta is the product of a \$209 million construction project.

The largest delegation in 1996 will be that of the USA.

The Georgia Tech Aquatic Center, site of the swimming competition, can hold 15,635 spectators.

The Games are privately funded by sponsors, and sales of TV rights, tickets and licensed merchandise.

The Olympic stadium in Atlanta is the product of a \$209 million construction project.



The British National Cycling team passing by the score board at Stone Mountain Track



Mascot of the ceremonies

THE MASCOT for the 1996 Olympic Games, the animated, fun-filled character introduced to the world as "Whatzy" during the closing ceremonies of the 1992 Olympic Games in Barcelona, has been nicknamed "Izzy", thanks to suggestions submitted by thousands of children from around the world.

Although Izzy's main appeal is for children, his story is loaded with imagery and symbolism about the Olympics. His animated television special aired in the fall of 1995, told the tale of a mythical land inside the Olympic torch. Its inhabitants are responsible for keeping the Olympic spirit burning bright. After Izzy performs a heroic deed, the torch world's council of elders awards him the chance to fulfill his dream of going to the real Olympics.

But first, he must prove that he is worthy. Izzy overcomes challenge after another, earning the five magic rings, each of which represents a different quality: perseverance, excellence, integrity, sportsmanship and brotherhood.

Egypt's quest for gold

From Egypt's first Games in 1912, Enian Abdel-Moeti traces the nation's participation and examines how in the Olympics, politics and world events became inextricably entwined

In 1910, Egypt was the fourteenth country to join the International Olympic Committee (IOC), opening the way for its participation in the 1912 Games, with just one sportsman, fencer Ahmed Hassanain.

Egypt's full-scale participation began in 1920, when a delegation of 20 athletes took part in athletics, gymnastics, fencing, Greco-Roman wrestling, weightlifting, and football at the Brussels Olympics. Naturally enough, football was Egypt's first Olympic team sport, and the national team achieved a stunning victory over the Belgian team, then the world's number one, in the first round of the football championship at the 1924 Olympics.

Rumblings in the Egyptian political scene first reached the Olympic arena in 1932. Egypt refused the IOC's invitation to the tenth Olympic Games in Los Angeles that year and decided to boycott IOC meetings and activities in order to pressure the IOC to appoint an Egyptian as Egypt's IOC representative.

At that time, the representative was actually a Greek, Anglo Polanski. Although Polanski had lived in Egypt all his life, he was not an Egyptian citizen and, in line with the nationalist and anti-colonialist spirit of the times, Egypt felt that the rule that IOC members should represent their own countries should be applied in Egypt's case. The boycott ended two years later, when the IOC appointed Egypt's Mohammed Taber Pasha. Polanski became the representative for Greece.

As a colonised and foreign-dominated nation, many of those involved in sport resented the fact that foreign clubs were at the forefront of the Egyptian sports scene — the Italian Football Club, the Greek Sporting Club, the British and French Fencing Clubs. Foreign athletes from these clubs represented Egypt at international sporting events. Fencing, for example, was mainly controlled by the French, although some upper class Egyptians

eventually took part. Most rank and file Egyptians took up inexpensive sports which did not require special equipment and facilities, such as athletics, weightlifting and Greco-Roman wrestling. The tradition of success of highly independent weightlifters and wrestlers, training with little help from federations or clubs, continues today.

Polanski himself had been a distinguished athlete. He won 100 metres running events in 1903 in Alexandria, Athens and Izmir; broke the world record, and was finally declared the three continents' champion (of Africa, Europe and Asia). He was also a prime mover behind Egypt achieving Olympic status. Polanski's position and connections enabled him to form the first Egyptian Sports Federation in Alexandria in 1910, equivalent to the current Supreme Council for Youth and Sports. The Sports Federation was a step towards an Egyptian Olympic Committee, formed later the same year, enabling Egypt to participate in the 1912 Games.

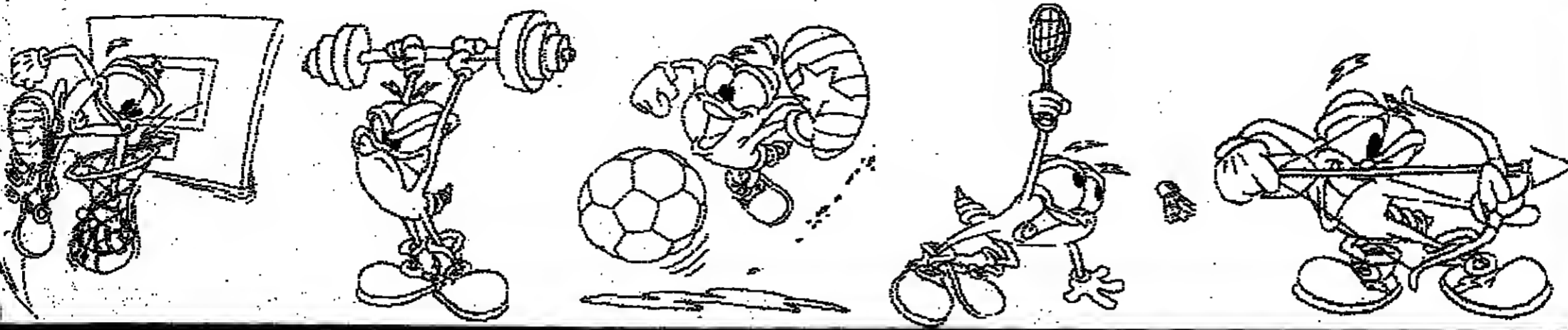
But Polanski was never able to realise his main ambition. It was his dream that Alexandria should host the Olympic Games. He was allotted land by the government, and build an Olympic Stadium, but he had chosen the wrong year. It was 1914, and the outbreak of World War I halted the Olympics for several years to come. When the war was finally over, Belgium was chosen to host the 1920 Games, and the site of Egypt's own Olympic stadium became the Olympi Club.

Egypt has been a pretty regular attendee at the Olympics since then. It has withdrawn on only four occasions. The first was in 1956, when Egypt refused to attend the Stockholm Olympics in protest at the joint attack on Suez by Britain, France, and Israel. In 1972, Egypt decided to send its delegation home after the killing of Israeli athletes by Palestinians at the Munich Games. Then, in 1976, the delegation joined a boycott to protest at New Zealand's

presence at the Games following a New Zealand rugby tour of South Africa earlier in the year. Egypt's next Olympic boycott of the Moscow Olympics in 1980, was in response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

Perhaps the most memorable Games for Egypt were the 1960 Olympics in Rome. At this period, Egypt and Syria had joined to form one nation, the United Arab Republic. The 32-strong joint delegation included athletes, footballers, weightlifters, equestrians, gymnasts, Greco-Roman wrestlers, divers, water polo players, an equestrian team, boxers, marksmen, and fencers. The equestrian team won fourth place for the first and last time, after Germany, the USA and Italy. In boxing, Abdel-Moneim Osman won a bronze medal, and Eid Osman won a silver medal in Greco-Roman wrestling. Through the years, many of Egypt's best athletes have been weightlifters: Gold medalist Sayed Nosseir won the light heavyweight category in 1928; Khidir El-Toumi won gold in the middleweight contest in 1936. There have also been silver medals by Anwar Moshah (lightweight) and Saleh Solaiman (featherweight), and bronze medals from Ibrahim Shams (featherweight), and Wasif Ibrahim (light heavyweight). While gold medals have eluded the Greco-Roman wrestlers, there were memorable performances by silver medalist Mahmoud Hussein (bantamweight) and bronze medalist Ibrahim Orabi (light heavyweight), in 1948, and by bronze medalist Abdel-Al Rashed (featherweight) in 1952, and silver medalist Eid Osman (flyweight) in 1968. More recently, Mohamed Rashwan won a silver medal for judo in 1984.

In the year 2000, Egypt should have the chance to add to its medal collection when Tae Kwon Do and squash, both events in which Egypt shines, become official Olympic sports. Tae Kwon Do has been a demonstration sport for the past two Games; on both occasions, Egypt's Amr Khairy took second place.



Egyptian Handball team

Egyptians in Atlanta

The Egyptian delegation starts competing in the two weeks-long Olympic Games tomorrow evening in Atlanta, USA. **Al-Ahram Weekly** profiles the 29 athletes



Heba Rashid



Bassel El-Gharabawi



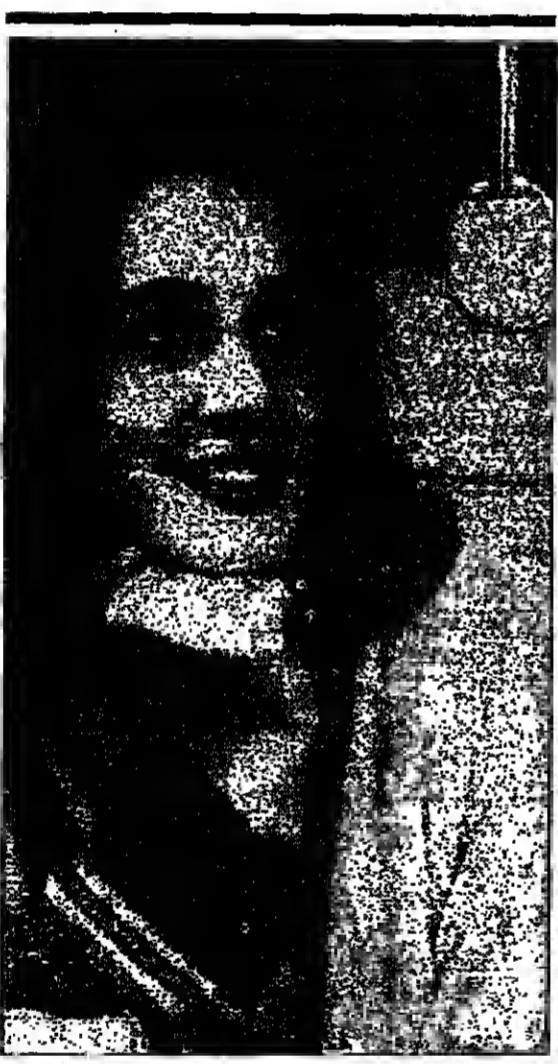
Mahmoud Khalifa



Ahmed El-Sayed



Harwat El-Bendary



Rania Elwany



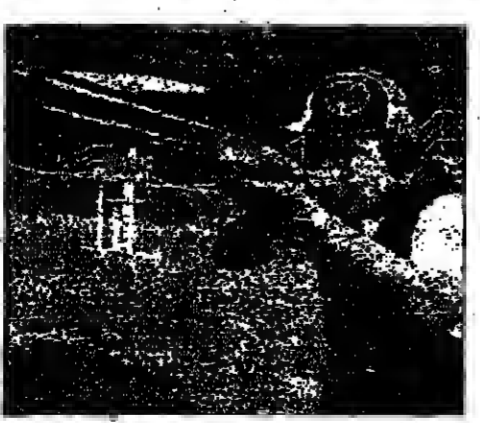
Ali Ibrahim



Mustafa Abdel Hareth



Mohamed Khorshid



Mustafa Hamdi

Weight-lifting
Name: Harwat El-Bendary
Age: 25
Height: 177cm
Weight: 95kg
Achievements: Three gold medals in the 1991 All Africa Games. Three gold medals in the 1993 Arab Championship. Two gold medals and one silver in the '94 African Championship in 1994.

Three gold medals in the '95 Arab Championship. Two gold medals and one bronze in the '95 All Africa Games. Three gold medals in the African Championship in 1996.
Preparations and expectations: He has taken part in various championships in the lead-up to Atlanta, winning gold medals in both the Arab and African championships. As well as joining a training camp in Alexandria, El-Bendary travelled to Bulgaria a month before the start of the Games to take part in a camp there.

Judo
Name: Heba Rashid
Age: 23
Height: 150cm
Weight: 170cm
Achievements: Gold medal in all Arab and African Championships from 1991-95. Bronze medal in England's International Championship in 1993. Fifth place in the 1994 World Championship. Silver medal in England's 1994 International Championship. Gold medal in Poland's 1994 Championship. Gold medal in the 1994 Francophonie Games. Gold medal in the 1995 All Africa Games in Zimbabwe. Two silver medals in the 1996 African Championship.
Preparations and expectations: Heba Rashid was chosen by the Olympic Solidarity Committee for training at the expense of the latter due to her past achievements. In preparation for the Olympics, Rashid entered a number of closed camps in Egypt and abroad. Outdoor camps were in Korea and Japan for 4 months, with the duration of each camp being one month. Additionally, she entered a two-week camp in Georgia prior to the arrival of the Egyptian delegation. Rashid hopes that she will take one of the first 8 places.

Name: Basil El-Gharabawi
Age: 20
Personal weight: 90kg
Competition weight: 95kg
Height: 184cm
Achievements: Gold medal in the 1993 African Championship. Gold medal in Russia's 1994 International Championship. Fifth place in Poland's 1994 International Championship. Bronze medal in the 1994 Junior's World Championship. Gold and silver medal in the 1996 African Championship.
Preparations and expectations: Like his teammate, Rashid, El-Gharabawi was also selected by the Olympic Solidarity Committee to be trained at their expense for the Atlanta Olympics. He also entered closed camps in Japan and Korea for three months where he competed against a number of Japanese champions. After the Japan and Korea camps, El-Gharabawi entered a closed camp for two weeks in Georgia to train until the arrival of the Egyptian Olympic

delegation. El-Gharabawi thinks that he will take sixth or seventh place out of the 18 judokas competing in his weight division.

Boxing
Name: Qabari Abdel-Karim
Age: 28
Personal weight: 73kg
Competition weight: 75kg
Height: 175cm
Achievements: Gold medal in the 1991 All Africa Games. Gold medal in the 1993 and 1994 Philippines International Championships. Two gold medals in the 1995 Golden Belt Championship in Romania. Bronze medal in the 1993 World Championship. Bronze medal in the 1995 All Africa Games in Zimbabwe. Fifth place in the 1995 Berlin World Championship. Bronze medal in Turkey's 1996 International Championship.
Preparations and expectations: He entered a number of closed camps at the Olympic Centre in Madi, as well as a 14-day camp in Romania in June. Additionally, he flew with the team to Cuba for a six-month closed camp prior to the Olympics. Qabari said he hopes to clinch one of the first three spots.

Name: Amr Mustafa
Age: 24
Personal weight: 90kg
Competition weight: 91kg
Height: 186cm
Achievements: Bronze and silver medals in Egypt's 1994 and 1995 International Championship. Bronze medal in the 1994 World Military Championship. Fifth place in the 1995 Berlin World Championship. Silver medal in Turkey's 1995 International Championship. Bronze medal in the 1995 Golden Belt Championship. Gold medal in the 1996 African Championship. Silver medal in the 1996 Golden Belt Championship.
Preparations and expectations: Mustafa spent two weeks in July in a training camp in Romania. In addition, he traveled with the team for a one-month outdoor camp in Cuba, and enrolled in a number of closed camps in the Madi Olympic Centre.

Name: Mahmoud Khalifa
Age: 25
Personal weight: 80kg
Competition weight: 82kg
Height: 174cm
Achievements: Gold medal in Egypt's 1994 International Championship. Silver medal in the 1995 Arab Championship. Silver medal in Russia's 1995 International Championship. Bronze medal in Turkey's 1995 International Championship. Fifth place in the 1995 World Championship.
Preparations and expectations: Like Mustafa, Khalifa spent two weeks in a training camp in Romania, as well as travelling with the team to Cuba for a month. When not abroad, he trained in several closed camps in the Madi Olympic Centre.

Name: Ahmed El-Sayed Ahmed
Age: 26
Personal weight: 114 kg
Competition weight: 115kg
Height: 2m
Achievements: Gold medal in the 1991 Philippines International Championship. Bronze medal in France's 1991 International Championship. Bronze, silver and gold medals in

Egypt's 1993, 94 and 95 International Championships, respectively. Gold medal in the 1995 All Africa Games in Zimbabwe. Bronze medal in the 1996 Golden Belt Championship Gold medal in the 1996 African Championship.
Preparations and expectations: Ahmed's preparations mirrored those of his teammates.

Swimming
Name: Rania Elwany
Age: 19
Weight: 62kg
Height: 172cm
Achievements: Elwany, the first Egyptian swimmer to qualify for Atlanta, is Egyptian and African champion in 50m, 100m and 200m freestyle, winning three gold, one silver and one bronze medal at the All Africa Games in 1995. She came seventh in the 50m freestyle, ninth in the 100m freestyle and 14th in the 200m freestyle in the world championships for short swimming pools. She has also done well in the conventional world championships, taking fifth place with 57 points in 1994 and second place with 63 points in 1995.

Preparations and expectations: With plenty of moxie from various sources, Elwany has been able to prepare well for Atlanta. She began training for the event in 1993 and has been working with her American coach Tim Hartrich for nearly six hours a day. She has taken part in many international competitions and in a closed camp in the US. If she succeeds in qualifying for Group A, it would be a great achievement because she would have proved herself one of the world's best eight swimmers. But qualification for Group B would still please her Egyptian fans. She is entering three Olympic events: the 50m, 100m and 200m freestyle.

Name: Tamer Zeinbom
Age: 22
Weight: 78kg
Height: 189cm
Achievements: Egyptian and African champion, Zeinbom is the holder of the African record in the 100m freestyle, set at the 1994 World Championships in Italy. His other best performances were at the All Africa Games in Egypt in 1991 and Zimbabwe in 1995, and in a championship in the Czech Republic, also in 1995.

Preparations and expectations: Most of his training has taken place in Egypt, including open and closed camps at the Abi Club and the Cairo Swimming Complex. He has also participated in international tournaments like the 1994 World Championships in Italy and All Africa Games in Zimbabwe in 1995, as well as tournaments in Turkey, France, Malta and Austria. He travelled early to Atlanta to join a camp there. Zeinbom is participating in four events: the 50m and 100m freestyle, 100m butterfly and 200m relay. The federation expects him to rank among the top 16 swimmers in the world.

Rowing
Name: Ali Ibrahim
Age: 24
Weight: 83kg
Height: 1.94cm
Achievements: Three-time Arab Champion. International Nile Race Champion.

Fourth place in the 1995 World Cup.

Preparations and expectations: Along with rowing in six competitions in Italy, Belgium and Germany, Ibrahim maintains a strenuous training regimen that includes five hours of rowing and five hours on the rowing machine per day. Prior to the inauguration of the Atlanta Games, he has reached a 90 per cent performance level. However, Shaher Tawfiq, ex-secretary general of the Rowing Federation said he expected Ibrahim to place between seventh and twelfth. "Eighteen of the world's best rowers will compete in the skiff race and I think finishing between seventh and twelfth is a good achievement for Ibrahim, a young rower with less experience than his competition". Before Atlanta, Ibrahim went to Pennsylvania to train for two weeks with some friends from the Rowing Federation.

Wrestling
Name: Mustafa Abdel-Hareth
Age: 29
Weight: 90kg
Height: 183cm
Achievements: Won fifth place at the World Championships in 1990, a gold medal at the Arab Championship and the All Africa Games in 1995.
Preparations and expectations: He participated in the African Wrestling Championship in Tunisia last April, and the Nantes Championship in France last May. During the last two months he has taken part in championships in Finland and Austria. He ended his preparations with a ten-day camp in Atlanta before the competition.

Shooting
Name: Mohamed Khorshid
Age: 46
Height: 180cm
Weight: 78kg
Achievements: Gold, and bronze medalist in the World Championships in Cairo in the skeet event. Arab and African champion as well throughout the past decade. Eighth in the final world championship in Italy.
Preparations and expectations: Khorshid was selected by the Olympic Solidarity Committee and has been training for the past year under the supervision of a Russian coach. He says that he cannot predict achieving a medal, because all the marksmen are close to each other and anyone could accomplish it, because the difference in points is usually very narrow.

Name: Mustafa Ismail Hamdi
Age: 24
Height: 168cm
Weight: 75kg
Achievements: Bronze medalist in the Sixth All Africa Games in Zimbabwe. Silver medalist in the Arab Championship in November 1995.

The handball team
Name: Amr El-Geusoshi
Age: 25
Height: 186cm
Weight: 95kg
Matches: 114

Name: Saber Hussein
Age: 22
Height: 194cm
Weight: 48kg
Matches: 10

Name: Sameh Abdel-Wareth
Age: 25
Height: 195cm
Weight: 102kg
Matches: 107

Name: Mohamed El-Nakib
Age: 22
Height: 190cm
Weight: 98kg
Matches: 104

Name: Ayman El-Alfi
Age: 22
Height: 180cm
Weight: 88kg
Matches: 53

Name: Hossam Gharib
Age: 30
Height: 185cm
Weight: 104kg
Matches: 196

Name: Gohar Nabil
Age: 24
Height: 186cm
Weight: 88kg
Matches: 127

Name: Ahmed El-Antar
Age: 29
Height: 202cm
Weight: 104kg
Matches: 125

Name: Ayman Salah
Age: 30
Height: 189cm
Weight: 98kg
Matches: 203

Name: Ashraf Awwad
Age: 24
Height: 194cm
Weight: 93kg
Matches: 117

Name: Mahmoud Hussein
Age: 24
Height: 189cm
Weight: 101kg
Matches: 111

Name: Ahmed Ramadan
Age: 23
Height: 198cm
Weight: 104kg
Matches: 22

Name: Ahmed El-Awadi
Age: 26
Height: 179cm
Weight: 98kg
Matches: 25

Name: Yasser Labib
Age: 30
Height: 180cm
Weight: 93kg
Matches: 132

Name: Ahmed Belal
Age: 27
Height: 182cm
Weight: 90kg
Matches: 110

Name: Khaled Hassan
Age: 27
Height: 182cm
Weight: 85kg
Matches: 68

Achievements: Sixth in the '95 world championship, fourth in the '96 World Cup, silver medalist in the '93 Mediterranean Games, and African champions in '91 and '93.
Preparations and expectations: The team has been undergoing intensive training under the supervision of Spanish coach Javier Cuesta, playing several friendly international encounters in Europe. The team is expected to win a medal in the Games.

Olympic vox pop

What does the Egyptian man or woman on the street think about the Olympics? **Dalia El-Hannawy** sounds out the public

With Olympic mania about to descend as television audiences worldwide watch the Atlanta athletes go through their paces, **Al-Ahram Weekly** took to the streets to discover what the Egyptian public makes of the Games. What sports will people be watching? Where do they think Egypt's best medal hopes lie? And what do they make of the controversial reduction in the size of the Egyptian delegation?

"I love to watch gymnastics, basketball, especially the American Dream Team, and I love handball because it was my sport for a time. I think we can do well in handball," said Maha El-Azhary, an Egyptian tour guide.

Her enthusiasm for handball was shared by most of our interviewees. "We'll get the best results in handball," predicted El-Azhary. Described as "Egypt's only hope" by salesman Asraf Abbas, and "our brilliant handball team" by businessman Sarwat Youssef, Egyptians are well aware that the national handball team is truly world class.

"Our athletes are still lagging behind the Europeans in most sports, but the handball

team should do better than the rest," summed up accountant Mohamed Hafez.

But viewers won't be ignoring Egypt's other sports and stars. "I'll be watching Mohamed Rashwan in the judo, and Rania Elwany in the swimming," volunteered Youssef.

"Bassel El-Gharabawi and Heba Rashid in the judo," said Hayam Mohamed, a decorator. "I love watching women's gymnastics and diving, and of course I'll be supporting the handball team," she added.

"Aside from handball, I love to watch basketball, athletics and judo," said student Mohamed Abdallah. El-Azhary will be glued to handball, gymnastics and swimming, keeping a particular eye on swimmer Rania Elwany.

Many of those interviewed took a dim view of the fact that a smaller delegation of athletes will be taking part in this year's Games.

"I'm completely against the reduction in the number of athletes going to Atlanta. It's at world events like this that our young athletes gain experience," commented El-Azhary.

"We need to train our athletes with major championships like this," agreed Youssef.

Some predicted that the smaller delegation would reflect badly in the results. "We'd have a better chance if we had more athletes competing," suggested Abdallah.

Others disagreed. "I don't think it will make a difference," said salesman Abbas. "I think our delegation will do badly in any case."

Mohamed Abdallah was more positive. "I am glad that they reduced the numbers, because only those capable of achieving something should be allowed to go," he said.

"Our athletes are great. They're just as good as foreign athletes and we should do well." And what of those lofty Olympic ideals of peace and unity? Perhaps we should give the last word to Mohamed Abdallah. "The Olympics are the greatest chance for people throughout the world to get together and develop good international relations through the world of sport," he said.

Awad El-Morri:

The rules of law

The photographs of the Chief Justice which accompany brief summaries of Supreme Court verdicts show a serious face, an imposing mane of grey hair. The Counsellor's name has grown familiar following significant rulings issued by the Court and a recent controversy over its prerogatives in determining the constitutionality of laws

It was not difficult to have an appointment set up with Counsellor Awad El-Morri. At the High Court, on the second floor, one is ushered without ceremony down a long crowded corridor, into an anteroom where a secretarial staff shows unexpected hospitality, and on into his office.

He is not as daunting, at first sight, as anticipated. He is distinguished, clean-cut and casual, in blue-striped shirtsleeves and a blue tie. A bit later, he asks casually: "You don't usually find judges in shirtsleeves, do you?" His jacket hangs on the side, never worn inside the office. "I believe in substantial concerns, not formalities."

He is candid. The dryness of the topic does not deter him from peppering the hour or so of legal talk with humour and anecdotes, something he learned, perhaps, from his teachers at law school, the legendary Sheikh Abu Zahra and Khalaf. He finds time to remark that he believes in the "expression of emotions in due time, whatever they may be... love, sentiment, even hatred. To suppress is the most dangerous thing which can happen to a human being."

He is able to intimidate and set at ease simultaneously. When speaking on his pet subject, constitutional law, he is detailed, elaborate and serious. He oversees the interview hawkishly, ascertaining that legal terminology is taken down correctly, tape recorders running smoothly — lessons learned, he says, in past encounters with journalists.

His high profile emerged five years ago this July, when he became head of the Supreme Constitutional Court's body of commissioners — oblivious of criticisms that he should not, as a judge, address the media.

"I do not discuss court sentences," he says categorically. But he is keen to elucidate, to explain; the Court's rulings should be revealed to the public, he insists, and their full texts published, because "it [the Court] is a practical teaching institute which illuminates the scope of human right and freedoms, not theoretically, but by applying them to concrete circumstances. It will make the layman assured of his safety through its rulings."

The Court was established in 1979 by the Constitution of 1971. Its function is statutory interpretation, determining whether statutes, laws and regulations conform to the Constitution; its rulings are binding on all authorities and branches of the judiciary. It also has the power of judicial review; deciding whether a particular statute, challenged before the Court, is valid. The establishment of the Court was a long-awaited step in the long process of judicial reform begun in the mid-1950s by the great jurist Abdel-Razzaq Al-Sanhuri. It was one more step, El-Morri says, along a path which would lead to constitutional law becoming an important framework of legal reference. "In Western countries, legal studies take place within the context of constitutional law."

The Court recently issued important rulings declaring the taxing of expatriate workers unconstitutional, absolving political party heads of responsibility for material published in party newspapers, and proclaiming the minister of education's ban on *niqab* (face veil) in schools unconstitutional. It also played a pivotal role in the debate over Shari'a as the source of legislation, and declared "acts of sovereignty" issued by the executive unconstitutional. The Court, though, sometimes tended toward headlong collision with government ministries and parliament in what seems to be a battle between the supreme judicial body and the political system at large.

Last week, the head of the parliamentary legislative committee announced that draft laws would not be submitted to the judiciary for review, a suggestion El-Morri had made a few weeks ago.

Nevertheless, El-Morri does not feel that the Court's position is in any way precarious. "It was expected

that difficulties would be encountered in executing the Court's rulings," he says. "President Mubarak had to intervene in order for the ruling on the unconstitutionality of expatriate taxes to be enforced. This cannot be expected to happen all the time, as the rulings should be valid and enforceable on their own account. But the Court will go on" — you can almost hear the gavel pounding the bench — "as long as it continues to function, and as long as the administrative branches of government believe in its legitimacy."

He has shrugged off the recent uproar over the Court's right to abrogate laws retroactively — a right contested by a professor of constitutional law, in reference to the Court's ruling of 1990 declaring the law regulating parliament during the 1987 elections unconstitutional. Parliament was then dissolved by presidential decree. The ruling not only put an end to the validity of the election law, but threatened to fell at one stroke all laws passed by the "illegal parliament."

"Some people interpreted Article 191 of the Constitution of 1971 as meaning that all laws preceding it (the constitution) would not be subject to the Supreme Court deciding their constitutionality. It said that all laws, rulings and regulations issued before 1971 should be valid and enforceable, yet it is possible to abrogate or modify them according to the rules and provisions stipulated in the Constitution. This means they are valid and enforceable as long as they are not modified or abrogated by the legislative authority. The aim was not to create a legislative vacuum by automatically abrogating all previous laws."

"Now, 25 years after its establishment, a debate arises regarding the Court's prerogatives. Some of those engaged in this debate want the Court to function more efficiently. Others have other motivations, but they are only harming the system, because it is only through constitutional legitimacy that the system will be established."

He believes, in fact, that "constitutional legitimacy is gaining ground. The Court started its work cautiously; now, its foundations are firm. For a constitutional court to be bold in a developing country — this is unexpected. For it to be stable is a real problem, and for it to be active is an even greater problem. But the Court is now consolidated, and there is no possibility of pushing it backward."

In a study published in 1995 by a German centre for administrative and legal studies, the Court was described as "unique and innovative, with considerable powers."

El-Morri himself was described as "a driving force behind the daring but balanced decisions of the Court, (in) his concern for the rule of law, and his use of comparative material (e.g. the deliberations of the US Supreme Court), a worthy successor to Al-Sanhuri."

The object of the supreme accolade smiles: "Al-Sanhuri... really, it is too much." In the coolness of his office, he points to a row of photographs: his predecessors. He is the seventh head of the Court. He is strong, and works with a team of like-minded judges. "If we did not work as a team, we would not be able to function."

It is hot outside. The High Court overlooks one of Cairo's densest intersections, between Ramses and 26 July Street. It seems a perverse twist of fate which has kept him posted in Cairo for 40 years. Most judges are appointed here and there, moving from one province to another; but he is here, in the city, "with its dust, its noise and pollution, which I most definitely dislike."

He was a member of the office of the vice-president of Egypt in Syria during the Unification, and of the Presidential Technical Office in the early sixties. Yet he always had an aversion to politics, feeling it would taint him. "If they paid me millions," he would never play the political game.

He obtained his Ph.D. from Ain Shams University in international law in 1979. He represented the United Arab Emirates at the UN Conference on the Law of the Sea. In 1983 he became a member of the Commission's Body of the Supreme Court, the precursor of the Supreme Constitutional Court, and headed the latter in 1991.

International and comparative law have been an important context for the Court's deliberations.

His work has been the most important thing, the one thing in his life. He takes it to heart, and deals with the trials which come with it, with humour and with wit. But his good humour gives way to anger when he feels that the Court has been unjustifiably attacked. He is not quick to anger, but when he expresses it, he is clear and unequivocal.

Now he is waiting eagerly for the opportunity to devour all the classics of English literature. In painting, he finds the ultimate relief — from "anger, depression and despair". He speaks of his daughter, married and emigrated to Canada, and of his son, with a deep yearning.

He remembers Port Said, where he was born in 1933, the son of a retail merchant. "I find it the most

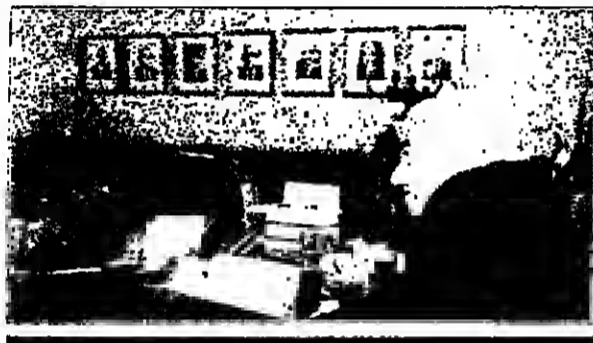
beautiful of all cities, really." He grew up open-minded in an open city, a port constantly filled with sailors and travellers from everywhere. He waxes lyrical when remembering Port Said. It was this power of expression, his keen desire to find an ever more precise means of self expression, which made him study law. It was a choice which, like so many things in his life, was intuitive — he is not given to over-rationalisation.

This open-mindedness remains important to him, in Court or out. "Freedom of expression does not depend on whether a particular idea is right or wrong. Its only objective is to lay down grounds

for knowing the truth. People should be open to all ideas, whether they are consistent with society's norms or not. Whether they are reprehensible or acceptable, ambiguous or clear, whether they satisfy or anger us — all must be laid down on the table. It is called the 'free trade of ideas'. To restrict the freedom of expression is to cancel the right of citizens to think."

He has not closed in the barriers of his mind. In his work, he has found satisfaction for his inclinations.

Profile by Aziza Sami



photos: Sherif Sombol

Pack of cards by Madame Sosostis

It's hot in the city, doors, and so I've packed my bags and headed for cooler, greener pastures. A woman with a complexion as delicate as mine can only stand so much of the sun's cruel rays.

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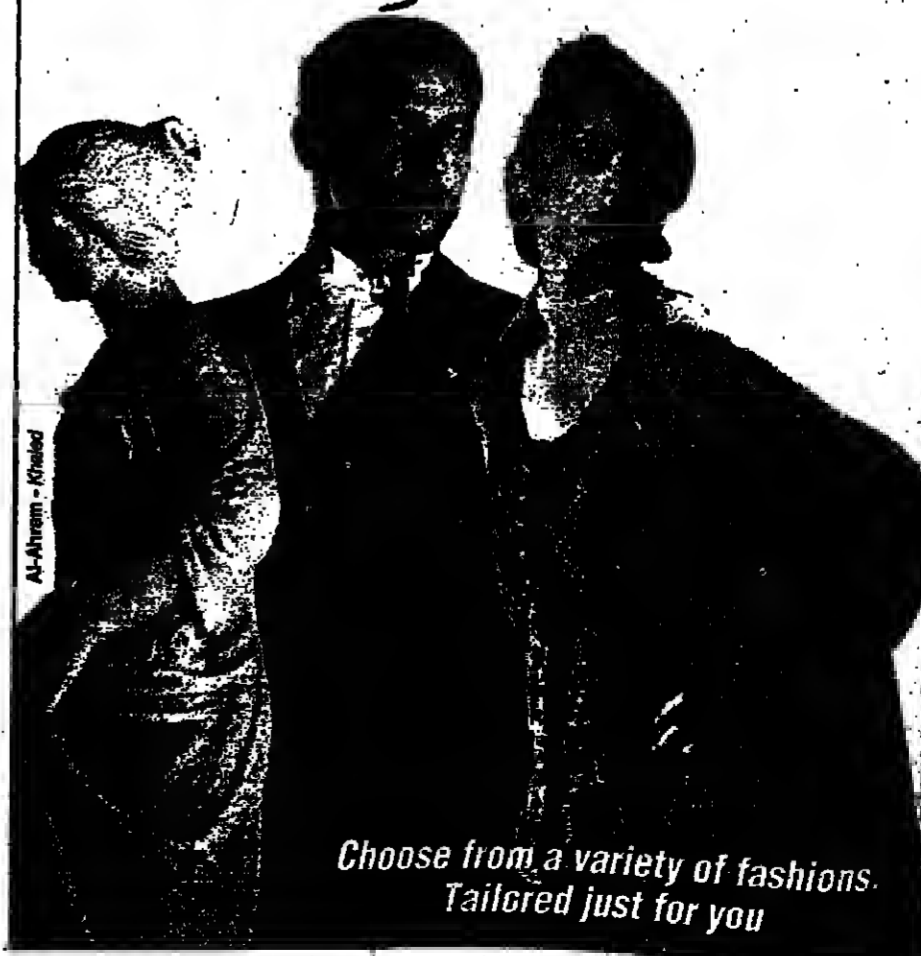
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